EXPERTS: MOST WON’T VOTE IN THIS ELECTION

About 25% of registered voters will elect local officials, decide levies.

By Michael D. Pitman
Staff Writer

BUTLER COUNTY — Less than half of the races in the Journal-News readership area to be decided in Tuesday’s election are contested, and there’s no state issue to drive voter turnout, which is why three-quarters of Butler County’s 244,000 registered voters are expected to sit this election out.

Miami University political science professor John Forren said by not voting, the majority of the voting public will let a minority of voters decide who’s running the communities and schools, and if tax levies pass or fail. He said that’s “unfortunate.”

“One of the long-standing ironies in American politics is that while our local elected officials make some very important decisions about how government affects our day-to-day lives, most of us are only vaguely aware of who serves in local office and what local government actually does for us,” Forren said.

Butler County Board of Elections Director Diane Noonan and Deputy Director Eric Corbin said in a joint statement it’s important for people to vote in every election “because the candidates who are elected to office whether on the local, state or federal level make decisions that impact our daily lives. This year school boards, Butler County voters will decide who will lead local school boards, city and village councils, and boards of trustees, as well as some issues. NICK GRAMM/PREP FILE

You can still vote early today and Monday in Ohio. Here are the ways you can cast a ballot in Butler and Warren county:

■ In-person voting: Visit your county Board of Elections 1 to 5 p.m. today and 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. Monday.
■ Absentee voting (also known as vote-by-mail): If you requested a vote-by-mail ballot, it must be postmarked by Monday, Nov. 4, and received by the elections office within 10 days after Election Day. You can return your ballot in person at the Board of Elections office by the end of voting on Tuesday, Nov. 5.
■ Board of elections: Butler County Board of Elections is at 1802 Princeton Road, Suite 600, Hamilton and can be reached at 513-887-3700. Warren County Board of Elections is at 520 Justice Drive, Lebanon and can be reached at 513-695-1358.
■ Learn about the candidates and issues: Check out the Journal-News/Cox Media Group Ohio voter guide at Journal-News.com/voterguide.

For more information, call the Butler County Board of Elections at 513-897-7555 or the Warren County Board of Elections at 513-695-1358.

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WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THE ELECTION

OFFICIALS WEIGH HOW TO ENFORCE NEW LEGAL AGE TO BUY TOBACCO

Local licenses may be required but change won’t happen until next year.

By Mike Rutledge
Staff Writer

HAMILTON — Now that the legal age to buy tobacco products in Ohio has risen to 21, local health departments are figuring out how they’re going to enforce that law.

The health commissioners of Middletown and Butler County met last week and decided to ask their boards whether they should license stores that sell cigarettes, vaping devices and other tobacco products. Hamilton’s health commissioner, Kay Parrish, was unable to meet at the time.

Leaders of the health districts have been meeting with Kristina Latta-Landefeld of Envision Partnerships, a local non-profit that works to help people live healthy and drug-free lives, to discuss ways local governments elsewhere in Ohio have enforced similar local laws.

Ohio will not require stores selling tobacco products to obtain any kind of licenses to enforce the state’s new law, because that would require adding more state staff, Latta-Landefeld said. But such licenses could be required locally, said Middletown
IN BRIEF

TIME CHANGE

Goodbye, for now, to daylight saving

As we return to daylight saving time, but not goodbye.

At 2 a.m. today, standard time returned to Ohio and across most of the United States, accompanied by the welcome one extra hour of sleep.

With the time shift, it'll be lighter earlier in the morning and darker earlier in the evening.

Daylight saving time returns March 8.

ENVIRONMENT

UK halts fracking ahead of election

The British government announced Saturday that it will no longer allow fracking because of new scientific analysis that casts doubts on the safety of the controversial practice, but some critics called the action an election ploy and demanded a permanent ban.

The government's new position was announced at the start of what is expected to be a hard-fought campaign ahead of a May 7 general election. There have been considerable protests against fracking in recent years.

WASHINGTON

Trump: Wolf to be next head of DHS

President Donald Trump said Chad Wolf, a longtime Homeland Security official, would be the new acting head of the department, the fifth person in the job for this administration.

But Trump's usual announcement, made Friday in response to a reporter's question outside the White House, temporarily created more uncertainty about who was in charge of the sprawling agency.

Weeks of speculation focused on who would be named the next leader, and Kevin McAleenan, the current acting secretary, had agreed to stay on temporarily.

The department initially would not confirm Wolf was next in line, saying only that McAleenan was acting secretary.

Tribal coal

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of coal-fired plants, including those in Wisconsin, and Arizona, Utah, and Nevada.

The power plant was built in the late 1960s on land leased from the Navajo Nation, one of two coal mines on the reservation. The other, Whiteriver Generating Station, is slated to close in 2022, and the nearby Four Corners Power Plant was already retired.

The plant has been operated for about 30 years, and the Navajo Nation estimates it still has a 10-year supply.

Without extending the coal mine's life beyond the 20 miles (32 kilometers) between the power plant and the silos at the Kayenta Mine, the coal could become uneconomical to transport.

"It's disappointing to us," said Randy Lehn, the mine's general manager. "We're doing everything we can to keep the mine up and running.

"Peabody Energy, which owns the mine, launched a $40 million campaign to keep the mine open," said a company official. "We're not giving up on it, but we're also not giving up on our efforts to reopen the mine."

Peabody Energy, which has the mine, launched a $40 million campaign to keep the mine open, said Randy Lehn, the mine's general manager. Residents of the Navajo community of LeChee, closest to the plant, wrote to Trump asking for help.

The Hopi Tribe is losing $14 million a year in coal revenue, or $25% of its general budget that pays for human services, information technology, and staff. The Hopi Tribe is losing $14 million a year in coal revenue, or $25% of its general budget that pays for human services, information technology, and staff. The Hopi Tribe has already lost hundreds of jobs because of the mine's closure.

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Tobacco

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Health Commissioner Jackie Phillips.

Latt-talandief said another technique that could be used to encourage retailers to enforce the law is public praise of stores that dare to do so.

"We have heard from our colleagues in other states that this approach has been successful," she said. "We want to encourage retailers to do the right thing, to sell to the right people."

Health experts, including Ohio Department of Health Director Dr. Amy Acton, have praised the law.

"Raising the sales age for tobacco and vaping products from 18 to 21 means that those who can legally obtain these products are less likely to do so in the same social networks as their high school students," Acton said.

Sgt. Rich Burkhardt, a spokesman for the Hamilton County Sheriff's Office, said police would enforce the new law by conducting random checks of tobacco and vaping products.

"We have seen a decrease in the sale of alcohol to minors," he said. "We hope to see a similar decrease in the sale of tobacco and vaping products."

Ohio law requires retailers to post signs that it is illegal to sell tobacco and alternative nicotine products to minors under 21. Clerks selling such products and owners of the stores can face criminal penalties that increase with each violation.

"The first offense is a fourth-degree misdemeanor, for which a clerk can face up to 30 days in jail and a fine up to $150, with the store facing a fine of $2,000," Phillips said.

Phillips said people elsewhere have found that if you license and enforce tobacco retailers, then they will do the right thing, sell to the right people.

In addition, the Ohio Department of Health is keeping track of the number of tobacco and vaping products sold in the state.

"Tobacco is a major cause of disease and death in the U.S.," Morris said. "Not only is it a cause of lung cancer, but it also can cause heart disease, kidney disease and other lung diseases as well. It's unbelievable how many diseases can be attributed to tobacco use."

"We believe it is the right thing to do," she said. "We are committed to helping our children make healthy choices."

The American Lung Association noted that people ages 18 through 25 are the largest group of smokers.

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