

## Don't let Ohio be the guinea pig again



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COVID-19 may have delayed some state ballot issues from moving forward, but we still have a serious issue that needs addressed for the voters of Ohio and the Ohio business community.

Ohio has been the testing ground for out-of-state interest groups and rogue, rich individuals to pilot law and constitution changes. These proposed changes most often benefit a few out-of-state, wealthy investors while hurting thousands of Ohioans.

We've seen these ballot proposals evolve and take shape time after time, and we are done allowing Ohioans to be guinea pigs, and our business leaders to be asked to defeat these proposals that should have never make it to the ballot in the first place. Businesses don't want these ballot issues, but we are being asked to defeat them every time. Something has to change.

In the past five years, four issues have cost the business community millions of dollars, wasted Ohio voters' time and forced a concerted effort to defeat:

■ In 2015, the Dayton Area Chamber of Commerce helped lead a statewide business coalition that raised \$2.5 million to defeat an Ohio constitutional amendment which would have created a recreational marijuana monopoly. This effort was funded by wealthy, out-of-state celebrities and flew in the face of Ohio's free market business practices.

■ In 2017, a billion-dollar California interest group tried to get Ohioans to vote for a prescription drug price-fixing amendment. Again, the business community was saddled with a bill of more than \$60 million for its defeat.

■ In 2018, interest groups from Los Angeles tried to get an amendment on the Ohio ballot that would have affected thousands of kidney dialysis patients. The business community ponied up \$12 million to defeat and remove this amendment from the Ohio ballot.

■ Also in 2018, businesses battled and defeated the Ohio constitutional amendment proposal that was backed by Mark Zuckerberg and George Soros, which would have

### ECONOMIC INDICATORS

#### Residential Home Sales

|                         | Aug '20       | Aug '19       | %Change | YTD '20         | YTD '19         | %Change |
|-------------------------|---------------|---------------|---------|-----------------|-----------------|---------|
| Number of Homes Sold    | 1707          | 1595          | -7.02%  | 10925           | 11,099          | -1.57%  |
| Total Home Sales        | \$348,114,929 | \$284,650,861 | 22.3%   | \$2,105,719,680 | \$1,959,671,932 | 7.46%   |
| Average Sale Price (\$) | \$203,934     | \$178,464     | 14.27%  | \$192,743       | \$176,554       | 9.17%   |

Source: Dayton Area Board of Realtors, Dayton Area Home Sales for August 2020

#### Sales Tax Collections

| County              | Current Rate | August 2020         | August 2019         | 12 Mos Change | YTD 2020             | YTD 2019             | YTD Change   |
|---------------------|--------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------|----------------------|----------------------|--------------|
| Butler              | 0.75         | \$3,953,386         | \$3,816,406         | 3.59%         | \$29,067,098         | \$29,888,758         | -2.75%       |
| Clark               | 1.5          | \$2,468,946         | \$2,216,133         | 11.41%        | \$18,169,111         | \$17,494,697         | 3.85%        |
| Darke               | 1.5          | \$812,251           | \$782,527           | 3.80%         | \$6,426,427          | \$6,005,963          | 7.00%        |
| Greene              | 1            | \$2,478,483         | \$2,328,119         | 6.46%         | \$18,992,745         | \$18,793,345         | 1.06%        |
| Miami               | 1.25         | \$1,913,271         | \$1,546,817         | 23.69%        | \$13,843,748         | \$12,539,145         | 10.40%       |
| Montgomery          | 1.25         | \$8,929,186         | \$8,422,377         | 6.02%         | \$67,467,507         | \$66,374,793         | 1.65%        |
| Preble              | 1.5          | \$566,636           | \$493,592           | 14.80%        | \$4,147,150          | \$3,943,776          | 5.16%        |
| Warren              | 1.25         | \$4,737,375         | \$4,750,128         | -0.27%        | \$36,754,664         | \$36,521,451         | 0.64%        |
| <b>Region Total</b> |              | <b>\$25,859,538</b> | <b>\$24,356,103</b> | <b>6.17%</b>  | <b>\$194,868,454</b> | <b>\$191,561,932</b> | <b>1.73%</b> |

Source: [http://www.tax.ohio.gov/tax\\_analysis/tax\\_data\\_series/sales\\_and\\_use/publications\\_tds\\_sales/S1M0820.aspx](http://www.tax.ohio.gov/tax_analysis/tax_data_series/sales_and_use/publications_tds_sales/S1M0820.aspx)

eliminated jail time for certain drug offenders, including those convicted of fentanyl, heroin and cocaine. Again, the Ohio business community stepped up.

For the small price tag of about \$2 million to \$3 million, any out-of-state interest group can hire savvy political consultants, lawyers and petition signature gatherers in Ohio to get an issue on the

ballot. This ease of access puts Ohio in the category of "low-hanging fruit" for interest groups to pilot constitutional amendments before they go national. And every time, our business community is looked to as the funding solution to defeat these bad constitutional amendments. This can't continue - it's not good for Ohio and it's not good for business.

At a minimum, there

are statutory changes that the Ohio General Assembly should consider, which will make it harder for out-of-state interest groups and investors to get issues on the Ohio ballot.

As we begin a new General Assembly in January, now is the time to act before we are faced with another unnecessary issue. It is important that Ohio has a ballot process that allows the citizens

of Ohio and the Ohio General Assembly to bring an issue to the electorate for consideration.

This same priority, however, doesn't need to exist for a select number of out-of-state groups that want to test their political ideologies at the expense of Ohioans. Interest groups can keep their money in California, and we'll keep our money in Ohio.

## Black Friday

continued from D1

Hobbies like baking and holiday traditions like wearing matching pajamas are also popular.

You can likely expect retailers to discount products that appeal to pandemic conditions. Best Buy's early Black Friday deals included markdowns on laptops and wireless headphones. Target slashed prices on things like video games and toys.

### In-store shopping is so 2019

In an effort to promote safety in the pandemic, most stores are closing on Thanksgiving this year. They're also bringing sales online - a move that's both convenient and cost-effective for Black Friday shoppers.

"We've heard retailers saying, 'We're probably going to offer the same deals both online and in store on Black Friday so that people can shop in the way that's most comfortable and safest for them,'" Cullen says.

That means many retailers won't be enticing customers to brave the crowds for in-store-only doorbusters, she adds. That's welcome news for consumers.

"Many shoppers will still feel uncomfortable going to brick-and-mortar retail stores, and many state and



Austin Landing held its holiday tree lighting ceremony virtually on Nov. 14. No matter how many sales retailers label throughout the year as "Black Friday" discounts, there's still something special about the day itself. This year, it falls on Nov. 27. CONTRIBUTED BY TOM GILLIAM

local governments are still imposing reduced capacity limits inside stores," Newman said.

Aside from the safety and convenience of not having to leave home, Arnold suspects this head-to-head online competition will also be a monetary win for shoppers.

"I think the consumer is going to benefit because now it's going to be a lot easier to compare prices with the competition online," Arnold says.

In the past, he says, retailers could lure shoppers into stores, and consumers

would often buy the products, even if they were listed online for a slightly better price. That's because at a physical store, you have the item with you and don't have to worry about shipping delays - even if you pay a little more for it.

### But exercise restraint

As in the past, for every impressive Black Friday deal you see, there's likely another deal that's less worthwhile. Set a budget ahead of time so you know exactly what you're looking to purchase

and how much you're comfortable spending.

Be cautious about your health, too. Look into a store's safety protocols to see if you'll feel safe being in a physical store. If you won't, many retailers allow you to buy online and pick up curbside, Cullen points out.

And if you've already shopped more than enough this holiday season during the impressive early sales, it's fair to say you can sit out Black Friday to avoid overspending.

## Toilet paper

continued from D1

remained level at 16%. Before the pandemic, 5% to 7% of consumer goods were typically out of stock, IRI said.

Contributing to the problem is the fact that roughly 10% of the workforce at manufacturing plants where the products are made are calling out sick, mainly because they've been in contact with others who were tested positive to COVID-19, Freeman said.

Kelly Anderson of Colorado Springs, Colorado, said she needs more supplies now that in-person school in her area was canceled earlier this month and her two children are at home more. She's noticed others are stocking up, too: Safeway and Walmart were

nearly wiped out of bottled water and disinfectant wipes during a recent visit, both of which had been easy to find since the summer.

It's also been harder to find a time slot to get her groceries delivered. Anderson says she's had to wait as many as two days instead of same-day delivery. But that's still not as bad as earlier this year.

"March seems like a million years ago, but I do remember freaking out," she said. "I couldn't get groceries delivered for a week."

Walmart said while supplies are stressed in some areas, it thinks it will be able to handle any stockpiling now than earlier this year. Amazon said its working with manufacturers to get items such as disinfecting wipes, paper towels and hand sanitizer in stock.



For the last six months, toilet paper was the hot item at stores in Dayton.

### TOURISM

## California wine country adapting to annual wildfire threat

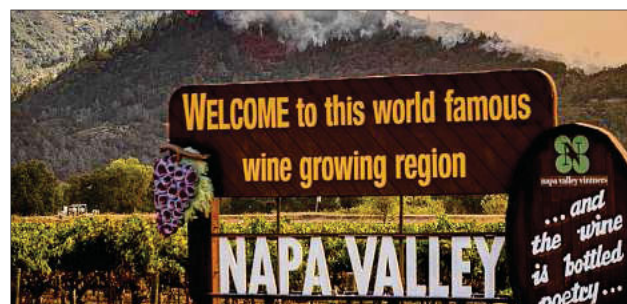
By Daisy Nguyen  
 Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO — Harvest season in Northern California's wine country is what dream weddings are made of: ripe grapevines and golden sunsets provide ceremonies an alluring backdrop that every year draws millions of visitors.

But harvest season now overlaps with fire season as wildfires, too, have become a yearly reality in the region.

In three of the past four years, major wildfires driven by a changing climate have devastated parts of the world-famous region, leaving little doubt that it's vulnerable to smoke, flames and blackouts in the fall.

Last month, firefighters were still mopping up a blaze that took a disastrous toll in



An air tanker drops retardant on the Glass Fire burning in Calistoga, Calif., in September. NOAH BERGER / AP FILE

Napa Valley when the region was put on edge again by hot, dry and windy weather. Thousands were without power when Pacific Gas & Electric utility cut off service to prevent the winds from downing lines and sparking another inferno.

After seeing news images of burning wineries and people fleeing their homes, Ash

Mintern decided to postpone a romantic getaway to wine country from Tampa, Florida to propose to his girlfriend.

"When I saw that people were evacuating out of the area, I didn't want to take a risk," Mintern said.

With visitors like Mintern second-guessing their plans to visit the region,

locals dependent on the tourist economy are rethinking their marketing plans.

"If the fires make major news every year, it's going to keep people from wanting to make long-term plans to vacation here," said Bob McClenahan, a photographer who lost all his wedding gigs this year.

The coronavirus pandemic was already hurting Napa and Sonoma counties' hospitality industry by halting wine tastings and large gatherings of any kind.

Closed wineries quickly pivoted to hosting virtual tastings and promoting wine clubs. The region started to slowly recover in late spring when restaurants and wineries reopened to outdoor drinking and dining. But in August, a series of lightning storms sparked wild-

fires west of Sonoma County and east of Napa, blanketing the region in thick smoke.

Then on Sept. 27, a small fire that began near the town of St. Helena was quickly pushed by winds across Napa Valley's verdant hills, burning down to the valley floor and consuming hundreds of homes before making its way to Sonoma County.

The two fires followed devastating wildfires last year and in 2017.

Lost or damaged in the blaze were some of the area's most iconic names: Meadowood, the Michelin-starred restaurant famous for its garden-to-table cuisine, was leveled except for its staircase and fireplaces. The flames devoured a farmhouse behind Castello di Amorosa, a winery that

resembles a medieval castle, and destroyed more than 100,000 bottles of wine.

"I've been in the wine business for 48 years and this is by far the most catastrophic, devastating, most horrible year," said Amorosa's owner Dario Sattui.

For now, strong hotel occupancy rates after previous fires suggest tourism will bounce back. Two luxury hotel chains are opening in the region, while several others are seeking permits to develop resorts.

But tourism officials in Napa and Sonoma counties recognize the fall has become an unreliable time to visit, so they've launched campaigns to encourage visitors from far away to plan for the winter or spring when wildflowers are in bloom and the pace is slower.