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The lack of affordability has ripple effects across urban communities, deepening economic inequalities and limiting social mobility. **Page 8**



# CLEVELAND OBSERVER

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# FreshFest Delivers Another Unforgettable Event

*The Big Daddy Kane with stands with a crowd of concertgoers. Photo Credit Vince Robinson.*



Vince Robinson  
The Cleveland Observer



SCAN TO LISTEN



*FreshFest co-founders Environmental Health Watch, Rid-All Green Partnership, and Brittany's Record Shop. Photo Credit: Vince Robinson.*

In its fifth year, FreshFest Cleveland once again thrilled festival goers with a lineup that included headliner Big Daddy Kane, a diverse selection of local acts, numerous vendors, and a crowd of thousands. The festival, founded in 2019 by Environmental Health Watch, Rid-All Green Partnership, and Brittany's Record Shop, has grown into a staple event, celebrating music, culture, and sustainability.

Held on the grounds of Rid-All Green Partnership's urban farm near East 82nd Street and Kinsman Road, the festival's location has garnered international recognition for its innovative agricultural practices. The farm cultivates fresh produce and raises tilapia hydroponically on repurposed land, serving as a model for sustainability and urban farming.

Big Daddy Kane, the latest in a line of legendary hip-hop headliners, followed in the footsteps of icons like Biz Markie, Spinderella, DJ Kid Capri, and KRS-One. Performing a set filled with classics like Smooth Operator and I Get the Job Done, Kane's energy and lyrical prowess captivated the audience. At 56, Kane commanded the stage with his signature intensity, though he left most of the dance moves to his B-Boy, Ta-Ta.

The crowd showed their appreciation throughout the set, particularly during an unforgettable moment when Kane stepped off

the stage to invite a fan to cross the barricade and snap a photo of him with ecstatic female fans. The crowd roared as the photographer captured the shot of a lifetime.

Kane's connection with the audience deepened when he invited two young fans—a boy and a girl, ages 11 and 9—to join him for an impromptu old-school hip-hop history lesson. Though they didn't know the song he referenced, the moment was a crowd-pleaser nonetheless.

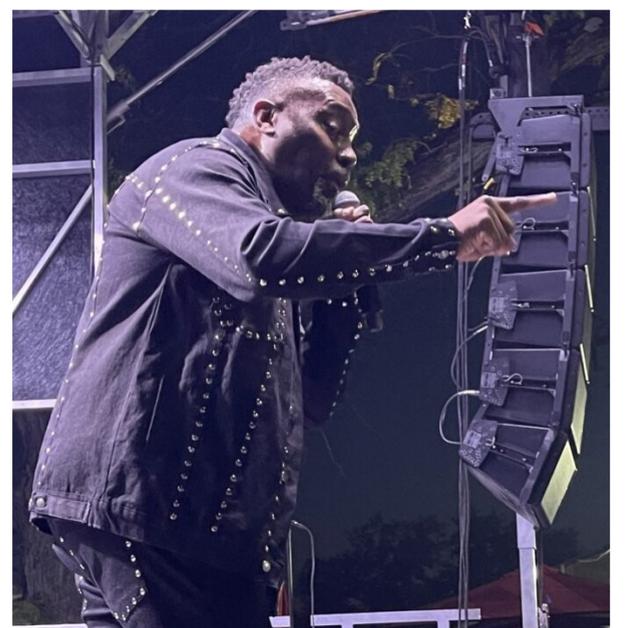
In another special highlight, Environmental Health Watch CEO Kim Foreman presented Kane with an '80s-style gold-plated dookie rope chain, a nostalgic nod to the golden era of hip-hop. Kane wore it proudly for a short while before returning it to Foreman, to the delight of the crowd.

For 45 electrifying minutes, fans witnessed a true hip-hop legend in action. As Kane donned his signature white hat and cape to close the set, he exited the stage, and just

like that, FreshFest '24 said it's goodnight.

Beyond the music, FreshFest Cleveland continues to flourish as a platform that shines a spotlight on Rid-All's urban farm and its mission to promote sustainability and regeneration. Rid-All's influence extends beyond the festival, with the farm operating Farmer Jones, a produce market in Maple Heights that sells its fresh fruits and vegetables, while focusing on plant-based products.

Rid-All's work was recently highlighted in a documentary screened at the Greater Cleveland Urban Film Festival at Karamu House, underscoring its national impact and the vital role it plays in the community. As FreshFest evolves, it remains a beacon for the fusion of culture, music, and sustainable living.



*Big Daddy Kane performs at Rid-All FreshFest. Photo Credit Vince Robinson.*

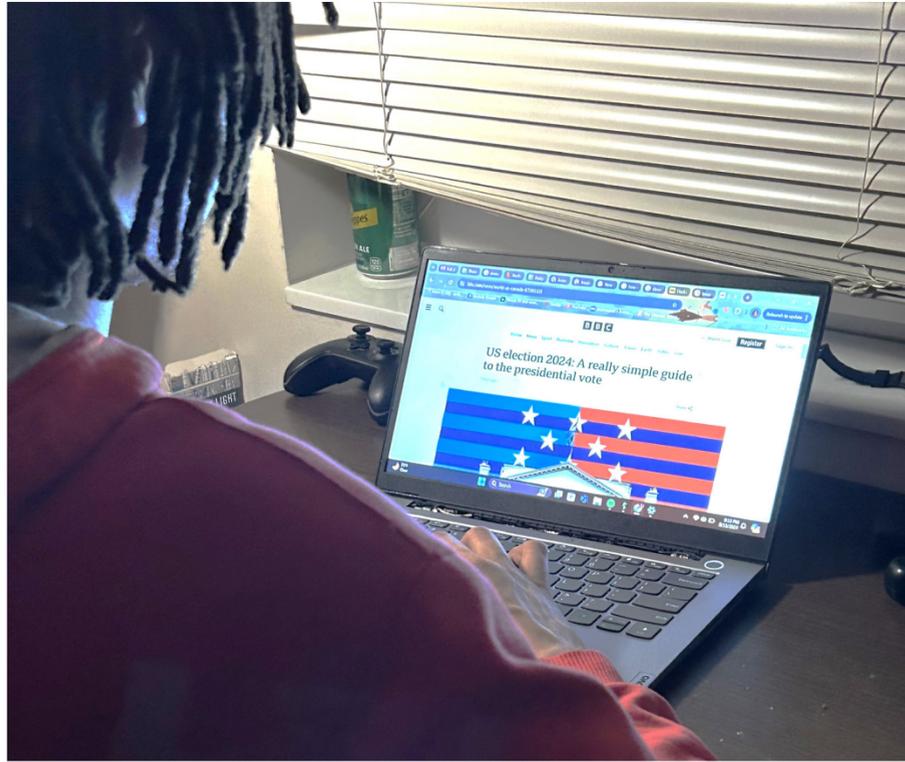
## First Time Gen Z Voters Share Their Thoughts on Elections



Sarai Murdock  
The Cleveland Observer



SCAN TO LISTEN



Andrew Easterling reads election information. Photo Credit: Symone Prewitt

With the presidential election fast approaching, Gen Z voters are stepping into the political spotlight, many casting their first votes for president this November. As the race heats up, the key questions on everyone's mind are: what do first-time voters think, and how will they shape the election? Conversations have centered around the possibility of the U.S. electing its first female president, third-party candidates, and Project 2025.

Following President Joe Biden's announcement that he would not seek re-election, Vice President Kamala Harris has taken his place at the top of the Democratic ticket, facing off against former President Donald Trump, the Republican frontrunner. As Election Day nears, young voters are weighing their options.

"I think it could really be anyone's game at this point. But people are hoping that Kamala wins," said 21-year-old Andrew Easterling, a Cleveland State University senior studying film. Though he has voted in local elections since turning 18, this will be his first presidential vote. As an independent voter, Easterling is focused on electing a candidate who can benefit the Black community and address inflation.

"Kamala has made a lot of promises, and I hope she sticks to them. I'd feel hopeful if she became president," Easterling added.

Ryan Lawson, 21, returned to Cleveland after attending Columbia College in Chicago. He's now taking a gap year to build his finances and network. For Lawson, this will be his first time voting in any election. While he sees Harris as potentially more in touch with everyday people than her political peers, Lawson feels disillusioned by the two-party system.

"I think the current system is flawed. Everything focuses on the two main parties, Republican and Democrat, but there are always more candidates running,"

Lawson said, echoing a common concern among young voters.

In addition to Harris and Trump, several third-party candidates have entered the race, including Cornell West running independently, Jill Stein for the Green Party, Chase Oliver representing the Libertarian Party, and Claudia De la Cruz for the Party for Socialism and Liberation.

Lawson is particularly wary of another Trump presidency, citing the former president's response to the Black Lives Matter protests in 2020 after George Floyd's death. Trump's tweet, "When the looting starts, the shooting starts," during the protests left an impression on him.

"Trump had his chance, and it was scary to see what he did. I don't want to go back to that. Some of his actions were really questionable, and it felt like he used his power to get away with things," Lawson said.

For 19-year-old Zarriana Price, a first-time voter who registered the day after her birthday, the idea of Trump's potential return to the White House brings a sense of unease.

"Minorities are scared of Trump being president again, especially after the whole Project 2025 thing," Price said, referencing concerns about a conservative policy agenda being rolled out should Trump win a second term.

Price, who is currently on a gap semester focusing on work, admitted she's not deeply political but believes staying informed is important. She also expressed

skepticism about voting merely to prevent someone else from becoming president.

"People vote to avoid having a certain candidate, but they don't even look at what the other person offers," she noted.

According to The Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE), Gen Z will make up over 40 million potential voters in 2024, including eight million new voters who've reached voting age since 2022. This demographic alone will represent nearly one-fifth of the American electorate, and when combined with younger Millennials, they could become a powerful force in the election.

Last year, CIRCLE, in partnership with Action for the Climate Emergency (ACE) and Climate Power, surveyed 2,017 U.S. citizens between 18-34. The results revealed that 57% of respondents are "extremely likely" to vote, with 51% identifying as Democrats. Their top concerns include the economy, the environment, and gun violence.

Lawson shares many of these concerns, particularly regarding gun control. "If anyone's willing to even try to change our gun laws, that'll be a good idea, but education is important too," he said.

Easterling and Lawson both view the economy and gun violence as critical issues, while Price's main concern is the effectiveness of the government in addressing these problems.

As the 2024 election unfolds, these first-time Gen Z voters will

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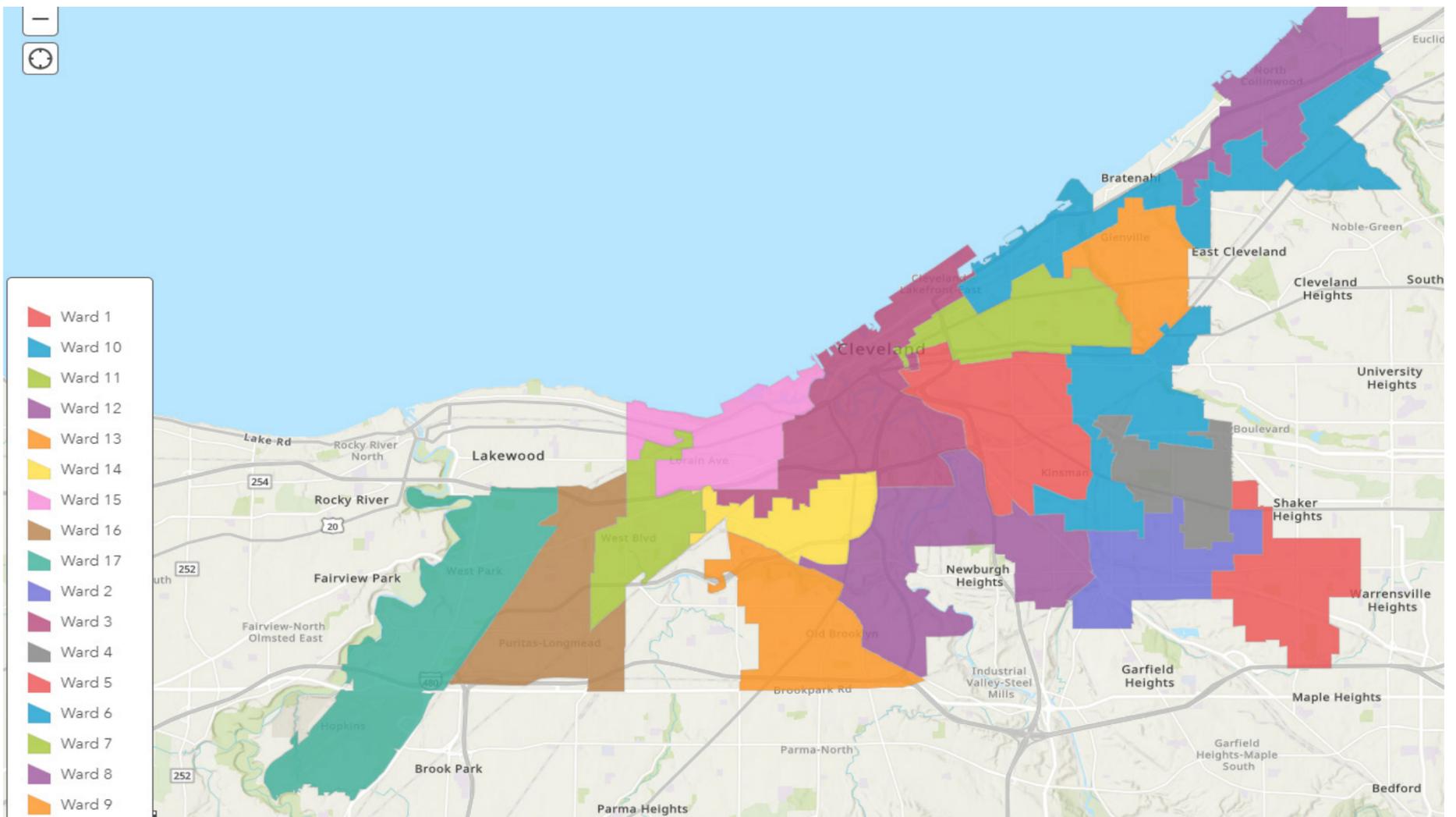
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## Cleveland City Council Redistricting Rundown



Map of the City of Cleveland's 17 separate wards Photo credit: Cleveland City Council website.



Lisa O'Brien  
The Cleveland Observer



the council aims to have the map approved before the end of the year. Once the map is completed by the consulting team, the council plans to hold four meetings around the city for residents to view the map and provide feedback. Details of these meetings have not yet been released.

In the meantime, the council members urge residents to use Dave's Redistricting App to see previous districting maps and to understand the type of work the council has ahead of it.

The Cleveland Observer took the liberty of exploring this resource and has determined that it seems more useful for viewing state-wide congressional and senate district lines than it is for focusing on the issue here in Cleveland. As the council president said, you are welcome to try it for yourself.

Griffin shared that after hearing concerns about the redistricting, the council wants to prioritize "keeping neighborhoods intact, more condensed, more equitable in having access to schools, libraries, recreation centers, and other resources" and to use natural boundaries to create wards in a way that is "very transparent."

### How Does This Affect You?

As a whole, redistricting is very important as it determines which voters can vote for which representatives. Changing the lines can result in changes in voter demographics that favor one candidate over another. When this is done purposely by the political body running for office,

it is known as the illegal process of gerrymandering.

Gerrymandering, a hot topic for Ohioans this election cycle, is on the ballot in the form of Issue 1. Issue 1, more popularly referred to as the "Citizens Not Politicians" amendment, proposes that redistricting be performed by a commission of everyday citizens from multiple parties and that current and former politicians or party officials should be banned from sitting on the commission.

While Issue 1 refers to state and congressional redistricting, it raises the question of whether it is fair for a governing body, such as a city council, to have the power to redraw and vote on their own district lines.

The map will likely be completed and voted on around the same time Ohioans vote whether to end state-wide gerrymandering, making the timing of the city's redistricting riveting.

The redistricting of Cleveland city wards determines not only the representation of residents in city government but also affects the level of funding

a neighborhood may receive for various projects.

For example, during the 2013 redistricting, the East Side lost Ward 11 and had significant shifts in the boundaries of Wards 7, 8, and 10. The West Side also saw the loss of Ward 19, though the boundary redrawing was made less contentious by Councilman Jay Westbrook retiring and giving up Ward 16. With the bulk of the 2020 population loss occurring on the East side, the question becomes whether this area will again take the brunt of the ward reductions.

### What Answers Do We Still Need?

With such an important decision approaching, the rushed process and delayed updates of the new map seem questionable.

TCO plans to investigate how the city's redistricting strategy actually serves the residents.

In the following months, we hope to provide updates on the city's motivations for the short time frame, the potential impacts of the new map, and how residents can get involved.



Cleveland City Council Courtesy: YouTube

### What Is Their Plan?

During the city council's press conference, Griffin outlined four main goals for the rest of the year, the last of which was the city redistricting project. Griffin explained that they should have a map "soon." He reiterated that

# How Power and Money Are Hurting Cleveland Communities



SCAN TO LISTEN

Staff Writer (Opinion)  
The Cleveland Observer

In Cleveland, many people struggle to stay in their homes and make ends meet. At the same time, decisions are being made that help those with power and money, but not everyday residents. This is called "elite capture." In Cleveland, elite capture can be found in city government, particularly in housing and city planning.

## What is Elite Capture?

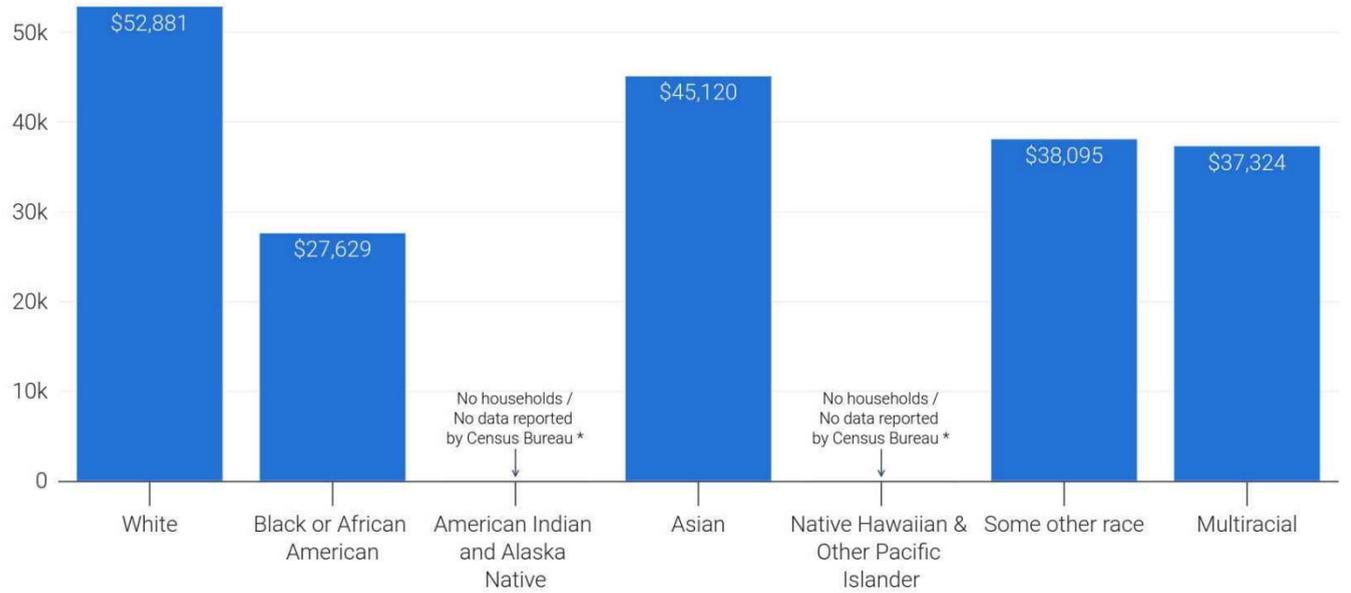
Elite capture happens when rich or powerful people take control of resources meant to help those in need. Samuel Stein, an expert on city planning, explains that the "system seems to be for the public, but really, the people with money make the final decisions." While a policy or budget allocation might be presented as helping the general public, like a new housing project or commercial development, the positive impact may only be felt by those already doing well. (Quote from YES! Magazine Feb 19, 2020)

## Elite Capture and Gentrification in Cleveland

Gentrification occurs when wealthier people move into a neighborhood and the original residents can no longer afford to live there. In Cleveland, this has been happening in places like the Tremont neighborhood. Tremont was home to working-class families for years, but property values increased as developers built new homes. This caused property taxes to rise, and long-

## Cleveland, OH median household income diversity across racial categories

In 2022, White households had the highest median income of \$52,881.



The Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS) 2022 1 - Year Estimates

time residents couldn't afford to pay. They faced the risk of losing their homes.

Henry Senyak, a community leader, pointed out that many residents can't keep up with the rising costs and are forced out of their neighborhoods.

"People are struggling to keep their homes while the city is making it harder for them to stay," he said. The city offers tax breaks to developers who build new homes, but the people who've lived in the neighborhood for years are being ignored. (Quote from Case Western Reserve University Gentrification, Revitalization, and Relocation)

This shows how elite capture works in Cleveland. The new homes are meant to bring money to the city, but they are only helping developers and wealthier new residents. The original residents, many on fixed incomes, are losing their homes.

## The Cleveland Clinic's Impact on Neighborhoods

The Cleveland Clinic is one of the city's biggest employers in the city, but it hasn't always been good for the neighborhoods around it. The hospital keeps expanding, but this has hurt nearby neighborhoods like Fairfax and Hough. These areas are mostly Black, and many residents feel that the city and the hospital have neglected them.

The hospital doesn't pay property taxes because it's a non-profit. This means less money for schools and public services in those neighborhoods. Even as the hospital grows, the surrounding communities stay poor.

One Fairfax resident said, "The Cleveland Clinic is getting bigger, but our neighborhood is still struggling." The hospital's success isn't helping the people who live right next door. (Case Western Reserve University).

Another example of elite capture is the Opportunity Corridor. This new highway connects the Cleveland Clinic to other parts of the city. It was meant to help poor neighborhoods, but it helps people who work at the hospital get there faster. It doesn't stop in the poor areas it goes through, and many families have been pushed out of their homes because of its construction.

## How Elite Capture Hurts Cleveland Politics

Elite capture is also a problem in Cleveland's political decisions. Politicians are supposed to represent all people, but sometimes they make decisions that benefit big businesses and wealthy people instead. This has been especially clear when it comes to housing policies. The voices of everyday

residents, particularly in low-income and Black neighborhoods, are often ignored.

Community organizations that began helping regular people sometimes end up being controlled by those with money. They take over the organization's mission and push for changes that don't help those in need. This is another way elite capture happens — by shifting the focus away from the real needs of people who live in the city.

## Moving Forward: What Cleveland Needs

While these problems are big, there are ways Cleveland can fight back against elite capture. One way is by supporting programs like the Longtime Owner Occupant Program (LOOP), which would help long-time residents stay in their homes by capping property tax increases. This would protect people who've lived in their neighborhoods for years from being pushed out due to rising costs.

Residents and community leaders are also calling for more transparency in city planning. They want a say in what happens in their neighborhoods and to ensure that future projects are designed to benefit everyone, not just the wealthy.

Community activist Fred Ward said, "We need to build the future of Cleveland together, and that means listening to every voice, not just the loudest and richest."

As Cleveland moves forward, city leaders and developers should work together to ensure that the city grows in a way that benefits its residents, not just those with money and power. Only then can Cleveland truly become a place where everyone has a chance to succeed.



ChatGPT created Graphic

## City Council Authorizes Public Safety's Participation at 2025 Presidential Inauguration.



Staff Writer  
The Cleveland Observer

CLEVELAND - In preparation for the 2025 presidential inauguration in Washington, D.C., Cleveland City Council passed an emergency ordinance authorizing the director of public safety to enter into mutual aid agreements with federal and local law enforcement agencies. This will allow Cleveland police officers to assist in providing additional security in Washington from January 17-21, during the historic event.

While the collaboration presents opportunities, safety advantages and potential concerns are associated with the mutual aid agreement.

### Enhanced Training and Experience

One of the significant benefits of Cleveland officers participating in the upcoming inauguration is the hands-on experience gained in managing large-scale security operations.

"This is an opportunity for our officers to learn best practices for handling crowds, VIP protection and high-level threats," said Ward 8 Councilman Michael D. Polensek. "They'll return with skills that will benefit Cleveland."

### Stronger Interagency Cooperation

Cleveland's collaboration with the U.S. Attorney's Office and the Metropolitan Police Department could strengthen future partnerships and provide Cleveland with access to valuable federal resources.

"Building relationships with law enforcement agencies in Washington, D.C. benefits Cleveland long-term," Council President Blaine A. Griffin said.

### Improved Local Response to Large Events

The skills and strategies officers learn can be applied to Cleveland's security needs. As the city prepares for major events or emergencies, the experience gained from the inauguration could enhance Cleveland's preparedness and response capabilities.

### Potential Risks

#### Strain on Local Resources

While Cleveland's officers are deployed in Washington, D.C., there could be a strain on local law enforcement resources. Depending on the number of officers sent, there may be gaps in personnel available for Cleveland's safety and security needs. Ensuring adequate staffing levels back home will be crucial.

#### Exposure to High-Risk Situations

Large events like the presidential inauguration carry inherent security risks, including threats of terrorism, civil unrest



Work has begun on an inauguration stage at the Capitol. The last one became part of Jan. 6, attack. Work on the presidential inauguration platform is kicking off at the U.S. Capitol. Congressional leaders pounded the first ceremonial nails into a stage they cast as a symbol of America's commitment to the peaceful transfer of power. (AP Photo: Mariam Zuhair)

and large-scale protests. Sending officers to Washington, D.C. could expose them to potentially dangerous situations, posing safety risks for the individuals involved.

### Logistical Challenges and Costs

Although the city will be reimbursed for services rendered, deploying the Cleveland officers to another city could introduce logistical challenges. Travel, coordination and ensuring the readiness of officers for an unfamiliar environment may require additional planning and resources.

### Conclusion

Despite these challenges, City Council expressed confidence

that the potential benefits outweigh the risks. The ordinance ensures that Cleveland will be reimbursed for its participation and allows the director of public safety to take the necessary steps to safeguard both the city's interests and the well-being of its officers.

This collaboration highlights Cleveland's commitment to supporting national security efforts while also investing in the professional development of its police force.

## Call to Action: Support Ohio House Bill 263 It's been in Committee status for a year!



Staff Writer  
The Cleveland Observer

Ohio House Bill 263, introduced by state Reps. Dani Isaacsohn (D - 24), Thomas Hall (R - 46), and cosponsor Munira Abdullahi (D - 9), offer crucial relief for long time homeowners, particularly seniors. This bill aims to freeze property taxes at current levels for qualifying homeowners, providing much-needed financial stability to those who have lived in their homes for many years.

### Why This Matters

The proposed legislation will benefit homeowners who:

- Are at least 70 years old
- Have continuously lived in their home, manufactured home, or mobile home for at least 10

- years
- Have an annual income of \$70,000 or less, adjusted for inflation
- Own a home valued at less than \$1 million

This bill freezes property taxes at the amount due from the year before qualification, shielding seniors from rising property taxes and ensuring they can remain in their homes without financial strain. Additionally, it maintains the current state reimbursement process to ensure local governments are not adversely affected.

### How You Can Help

Residents, contact your state rep. Make your voice heard. Contact your Ohio state district representative today and urge them to support and advance House Bill 263. Your advocacy can make a significant difference in ensuring that this vital legislation progresses through the legislative

process and becomes law. Contact Your Representative Find your state representative's contact details at the Ohio Legislature's website or through local government offices. Express your support for House Bill 263 and emphasize its importance in providing financial relief to our senior homeowners.

### A Plea to Our Representatives

To all members of the Ohio General Assembly, we urge you to prioritize House Bill 263. The bill has the potential to significantly impact the lives of many Ohioans by protecting longtime homeowners from escalating property taxes. Your leadership in moving this legislation forward is crucial to ensuring that our seniors are not left behind.

By advancing House Bill 263, you can demonstrate your commitment to supporting our elderly residents and addressing their housing stability needs. We

implore you to act swiftly and decisively to bring this bill to the forefront and pass it into law.

Let's work together to make Ohio a state that honors and supports its longtime residents. Your action today will shape a more secure future for our community.

Ohio House Democrats have introduced bipartisan legislation to help Ohio lower its property taxes:

- HB 60 (Troy) - Expands the homestead exemption to cover an additional \$75,000 for seniors and raises its value to \$40,000, providing nearly \$250M in targeted relief.
- HB 263 (Isaacsohn/Hall) - Freezes over \$400 million in property taxes for over 700,000 seniors making \$50,000 or less.
- HB 274 (Dell'Aquila/Matthews) - For individuals who qualify and have owned their homes for more than 20 years, this bill increases the exemption from \$26,200 to \$50,000.

Continued on page 6

## Trusting God Amid a Culture of Uncertainty



Ron Calhoun  
The Cleveland Observer

The uncanny similarities of the Persian empire experienced by Daniel test the faith of the young remnant of Christians today. How relentless is your faith walk?

Daniel 3:17-18 (ESV): "If this be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace ... But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image."

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego's belief in God's ability to deliver them, even while preparing for possible failure, exemplify radical trust. This type of faith is echoed in modern contexts, where believers are encouraged to trust God's will despite uncertain outcomes.

### Modern Application:

Today, Christians are encouraged to trust God's plan, even when it diverges from

their expectations. As a modern believer might assert, "True faith is trusting God's plan, no matter how uncertain the path may seem."

Proverbs 3:5-6 (NIV): "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight."

### Perseverance Through Persecution

Daniel 3:21-25 (NIV): "So these men, wearing their robes, trousers, turbans and other clothes, were bound and thrown into the blazing furnace ... Then King Nebuchadnezzar leaped to his feet in amazement and asked his advisers, 'Weren't there three men that we tied up and threw into the fire? ... I see four men walking around in the fire, unbound and unharmed, and the fourth looks like a son of the gods.'"

This moment demonstrates God's miraculous deliverance of His faithful servants who endured persecution for their unwavering faith. While many Christians today may not face physical persecution, like this, they encounter various forms of social, legal, or emotional

challenges for their beliefs. **Modern Application:**

In today's world, particularly in regions with restricted religious freedoms, Christians face different kinds of persecution. The story of Daniel and his friends offers hope and assurance that God is present during trials. One believer might express, "Even in the fire, God's presence brings deliverance and peace."

2 Timothy 3:12 (NIV): "In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted."

### Divine Deliverance and God's Sovereignty

Daniel 6:22-23 (NIV): "My God sent his angel, and he shut the mouths of the lions. They have not hurt me, because I was found innocent in his sight."

Daniel's deliverance from the lion's den is a powerful testament to divine intervention. Similarly, Christians today are reminded of God's sovereignty and His ability to deliver from trials. However, as illustrated by the Hebrews' declaration in the furnace, they must be prepared to remain faithful even if God's deliverance does not come as expected.

### Modern Application:

Many Christians pray for divine protection and deliverance in challenging times. Daniel's experience encourages believers to trust in God's sovereign plan, even when the outcome is not as anticipated. As one might say, "Our faith in God's sovereignty remains unshaken, whether deliverance comes in the way we expect or not."

Psalm 34:7 (NIV): "The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him, and he delivers them."

The stories of Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego resonate deeply with today's Christian experience. Themes of standing firm against cultural pressures, courageously living out faith, trusting God amid uncertainty, persevering through persecution, and embracing divine deliverance remain as relevant today as they were in biblical times. Their example is a timeless guide for modern Christians navigating a world where faith is continually tested.

Through their stories, Christians are encouraged to hold fast to their beliefs, trust in God's sovereignty, and be courageous in their expressions of faith. Their faithfulness and resolve offer enduring lessons for believers facing contemporary challenges.



ChatGPT created Graphic

## Call to Action

From page 5

- HB 645 (Isaacsohn/Hall) - Legislation that provides a \$1,000 property tax rebate to help more Ohioans afford their tax bills, targeting \$1 billion in tax relief to over 1.3 million middle-class homeowners and renters after their tax payments exceed 5% of their income.

### What is the hold-up?

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# Breast Cancer: Nurse Shares Her Journey to Recovery



Sharon Lewis  
The Cleveland Observer



SCAN TO LISTEN

Interview with Annette Reisner, MPA, BSN, RN. This article is for informational purposes only and is not intended to serve as a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment.

**Q: Can you tell us about how your breast cancer diagnosis began?**

**Reisner:** It started with a MyChart reminder in February, telling me it was time for my mammogram. Life had been so hectic that I had put my own health on the back burner. I lost my mom, my husband was diagnosed with prostate cancer, and my son has a seizure disorder. I've also been working full-time. When I saw the reminder, I finally scheduled the mammogram.

**Q: With your background in healthcare, how did you approach the situation once the cancer was found?**

**Reisner:** I'm a registered nurse with a master's in public administration, so I definitely came into this knowing more than the average patient. I've also studied natural health and medicine. When the cancer was discovered in my right breast, it was hard, but I knew what was happening right away. I could tell from the scans that it wasn't

good, especially when they said the tumor was spiculated, which means it had spikes.

**Q: Did you have any decisions to make early on?**

**Reisner:** Yes. At first, there was a question about whether cancer was in both breasts, but it turned out the left breast just had an inflamed mammary gland. From there, I had to decide on the type of surgery—whether to go with a radical mastectomy, which removes the entire breast, or something less extensive. I chose



Annette Reisner, MPA, BSN, RN

a lumpectomy, which removes only the cancerous tissue. My research told me survival rates aren't much higher with more radical surgeries.

**Q: What was the first step in your treatment plan?**

**Reisner:** I had a sentinel node biopsy, which involves removing a few lymph nodes to see if the cancer has spread. One of my lymph nodes was cancerous, which meant the cancer had spread. I had an outpatient lumpectomy surgery, but the pathology report

## BREAST CANCER HAS HIGH CURE RATES WHEN DETECTED AND TREATED EARLY

World Health Organization

#Cancer

showed the margins weren't clear, meaning not all the cancer was removed, so I had to undergo a second surgery. After that, I started radiation therapy.

**Q: How did you handle the radiation treatments?**

**Reisner:** I went through radiation five times a week in June. They targeted a much broader area than I had expected, which led to side effects like redness, swelling in my esophagus, and difficulty swallowing. But I healed well. My doctor was impressed with how fast my skin recovered. I used colloidal silver on my incision and frankincense and lemongrass essential oils to help with healing and reduce scarring.

**Q: What role did hormone therapy play in your treatment?**

**Reisner:** My tumor was estrogen-dominant, so I was prescribed an aromatase inhibitor to block estrogen's effects. One of the side effects of lowering estrogen is an increased risk of osteoporosis. I was instructed to take 1,200 mg of calcium a day, which can cause constipation, so I take magnesium to counteract that. I also see a naturopath who helped me understand that part of my calcium could come from food sources, like leafy greens and cheese, but I still take a supplement. The naturopath also told me to take boron, which helps calcium get into the bones and not stay in the blood, where it can cause kidney stones.

**Q: Have you made any lifestyle changes to support your recovery?**

**Reisner:** Yes, I've returned to my pre-diagnosis workout routine with my trainer, which includes resistance training and boxing. Weight-bearing exercises help build bone strength, which is crucial with the osteoporosis risk. I've also reduced my sugar intake. While it's a myth that sugar directly feeds cancer, it does suppress the immune system, which needs to be strong to fight cancer.

**Q: You mentioned mistletoe therapy. Can you explain what that is and why you chose it?**

**Reisner:** Mistletoe therapy has been used in Europe since the 1960s as a complementary treatment for cancer. It doesn't cure cancer, but it can strengthen the immune system, increase the activity of immune cells like T-cells and natural killer cells, and may have cytotoxic effects on cancer cells. I chose it to support my overall health and help manage some of the side effects of conventional treatments like chemotherapy and radiation. While studies have shown mixed results, it's improved my quality of life, and I'm glad I decided to try it.

**Q: What advice would you give to others facing a cancer diagnosis?**

**Reisner:** It's crucial to ask questions and understand your options. I learned that the hospital where you have surgery matters—some have more up-to-date technology that can determine in real-time if they've gotten clean margins, which could have prevented my second surgery. The same goes for radiation technology. I would have preferred a more targeted beam, which could have spared me some side effects. Most importantly, don't blindly accept everything you're told. Advocate for yourself, and if you can't, find someone who will. You're responsible for getting the best possible care for the best possible outcome.

## WORLD MARKS OCTOBER AS BREAST CANCER AWARENESS MONTH

Breast cancer is one of the most common types of cancer among women, but if it is diagnosed at an early stage, there is a good chance it can be successfully treated.

**For early diagnosis,** regular checks are a must.

**One out of eight women** in Turkey is diagnosed with breast cancer.

**Genetics** is one of the factors that causes breast cancer, but it accounts for between 10%-15% of all the cases. 85% of patients are the only cases in their families.

**Estrogen supply** is another serious risk factor of breast cancer.

Healthy nutrition, giving birth, breastfeeding, and cutting down on alcohol reduces **the risk.**

With October being **Breast Cancer Awareness Month**, expert informs about treatment, diagnosis, self-examination method

## SELF-EXAMINATION

**Every woman** above the age of 20 should have a medical examination every three years and examine themselves every month.

**First standing and then lying down,** the person should rest her neck on her arm and examine the entire breast, including the armpit, for suspicious lumps with the fingers, going in circles starting from the nipple.

Differences such as **deformities, asymmetry, redness of the breast skin, nipple retention and fluid leaks** should be observed in front of the mirror.

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## U.S. Ranked Last in Health Care Faces Long Road Of Challenges in Urban Communities



ChatGPT created Graphic



SCAN TO LISTEN

Staff Writer  
The Cleveland Observer

Comparing Performance in 10 Nations, the *Mirror, Mirror 2024: A Portrait of the Failing U.S. Health System* provides a sobering analysis of the U.S. health care system compared to nine other high-income countries. The eighth edition of the report, which examines access to care, health outcomes, administrative efficiency, and equity, highlights a glaring disparity: despite spending significantly more on health care than any other country, the U.S. ranks last overall.

The findings have particular implications for urban communities in the United States, where access to affordable, high-quality health care remains a critical issue. In Cleveland and other cities, residents face numerous barriers to receiving timely care, exacerbating health disparities and economic instability.

Surveys indicate that health care is among the top priorities for voters in the November presidential election. Vice President Kamala Harris has pitched building on the Affordable Care Act, commonly

known as Obamacare. Former President Donald Trump has given little detail about his health care vision; his running mate, JD Vance, has suggested deregulation.

### How the U.S. Compares

The *Mirror, Mirror 2024* report analyzed health systems in 10 countries: Australia, Canada, France, Germany, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the U.S. While every country has strengths and weaknesses, the U.S. is an outlier in both health outcomes and spending. Despite investing more than 16% of its gross domestic product (GDP) in health care—compared to around 10% in other nations—the U.S. has worse health outcomes than all its peers.

In urban areas, the challenges are acute. Access to affordable care is hampered by fragmented insurance systems, high deductibles, and extensive out-of-pocket costs. As of 2023, 41% of Americans reported spending \$1,000 or more on health care out of pocket. For residents of cities like Cleveland, where poverty rates are high and access to primary care is limited, the cost of care can deter people from seeking necessary medical attention.

### The Impact on Urban Communities

The report identifies access to care and equity as critical areas where the U.S. continues to lag. Cities with large, underserved populations, including Cleveland, experience significant disparities in health care access. The U.S. ranks poorly in equity, with large differences in health care experiences between individuals with above-average and below-average incomes.

While some countries, like Germany and Australia, have systems in place to cap out-of-pocket costs, ensuring affordability for all citizens, the U.S. lacks similar safeguards. The Affordable Care Act (ACA) has made strides in reducing the number of uninsured, but 26 million Americans remain without coverage, and many more are underinsured. This leaves urban residents disproportionately burdened by the cost of care.

For Clevelanders, who often rely on safety-net health services, these financial barriers lead to skipped medical appointments, unfilled prescriptions, and worsening health conditions. The lack of affordability has ripple effects across urban communities, deepening economic inequalities and limiting social mobility.

### The Administrative Burden

Another key finding in the *Mirror, Mirror 2024* report is the

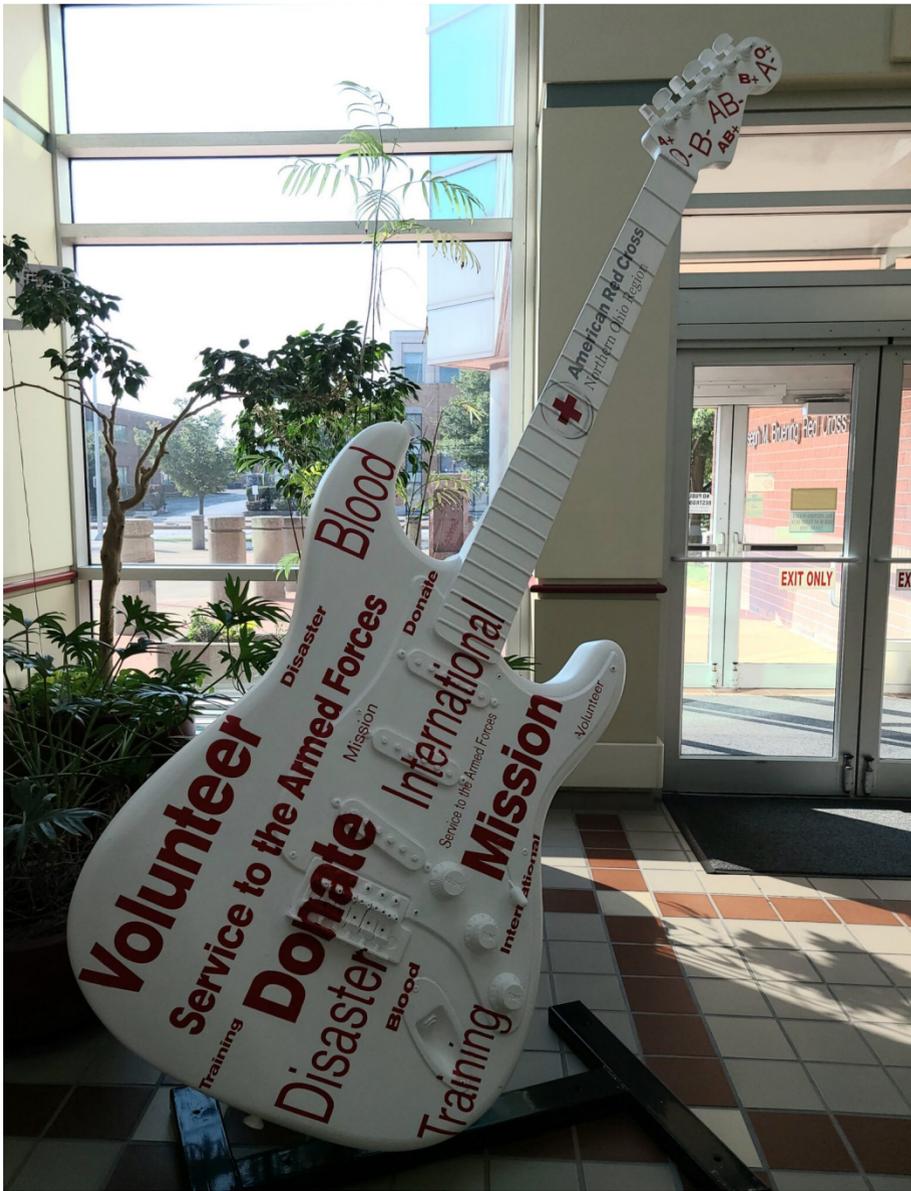
U.S.'s inefficiency in health care administration. The country ranks last in administrative efficiency, with doctors and patients frequently reporting challenges related to billing, insurance claims, and paperwork. In cities like Cleveland, this administrative complexity further strains the health system.

The U.S. health care system, with its multitude of insurance plans and varying coverage options, places a heavy burden on both patients and providers. This inefficiency leads to delays in care and increases the likelihood that patients will avoid seeking treatment due to confusion or frustration with the system.

### Health Outcomes and Public Health Concerns

One of the most alarming findings in the report is the poor performance of the U.S. in health outcomes. Life expectancy in the U.S. is more than four years lower than the average of the other countries studied, and the U.S. has the highest rates of preventable deaths. The ongoing substance abuse crisis, combined with high levels of gun violence, disproportionately affects urban areas, exacerbating the already poor health outcomes.

*Continued on page 9*



## A Plea for Blood



M. White  
The Cleveland Observer



According to the Red Cross, blood donations are more effective when the antigens closely match those of the recipient. Antigens, which help the body recognize harmful substances, vary among ethnicities. Blood with matching antigens reduces complications during transfusions, making it vital that Black individuals donate blood, especially for Black gunshot victims and patients with sickle cell disease.

There are numerous reasons people avoid donating, such as a fear of needles, lack of time, or concerns about contamination. However, the blood donation process takes just 35 minutes and involves a quick needle prick. The body replenishes plasma within 24 hours and red blood cells within six weeks. The risk of contamination is virtually nonexistent due to strict protocols.

The need for Black, Indigenous, and people of color to donate blood is urgent. Whether for sickle cell disease patients, cancer patients, or victims of gun violence, donated blood can save lives. One pint of blood can help up to three people.

If you know a Black male, a sickle cell patient, a cancer patient, or someone at risk of injury, consider donating blood. Your gift can save lives.

**Give the gift of life. Give blood.**

Blood is invaluable. It saves lives in just minutes of donating. According to the American Society of Hematology, blood consists of four key components: plasma, red blood cells, white blood cells, and platelets, all of which are crucial to healing and saving lives.

Gunshot and stabbing victims often require donated blood, but many donations come from individuals lacking melanin. According to Mayor Bibb's 2023 Violence & Injury Report, Cleveland's gun violence rate exceeds the national average, with 102.1 emergency room visits per 100,000 residents due to gunshot wounds in 2023—about 368 victims. While this is a decrease from 2022, the figures remain alarming.

Data from the National Library of Medicine in 2022 showed that Black individuals made up 48.7% of all gunshot wound hospitalizations, and 12.7% of those required blood transfusions. Black males aged 18-24 are the most affected group in Cuyahoga County.

Despite this, Black blood donors are disproportionately low compared to white donors, creating a critical need for donations from Black individuals.

## U.S. ranked last in health care:

From front Page 8

COVID-19 further exposed weaknesses in the U.S. health system. The report notes that countries like Australia and New Zealand, which implemented swift public health interventions, managed to mitigate the pandemic's impact far better than the U.S. In urban communities, where social determinants of health such as housing, income, and education are already inequitable, the pandemic's toll has been even more devastating.

### The Way Forward for U.S. Cities

The report emphasizes that improving the U.S. health care system will require substantial policy reforms, particularly to address the needs of urban communities. Key areas for reform include:

- **Expanding Coverage and Reducing Costs:** The U.S. needs to further reduce the number of uninsured and underinsured people. This could be achieved through continued expansion of Medicaid, increased subsidies for ACA marketplace plans, or even more radical reforms like a public option or single-payer system.
- **Investing in Primary Care:** Primary care shortages, particularly in urban areas, contribute to the poor health outcomes seen across the U.S. The report recommends investing in primary care providers and improving compensation to attract

more doctors to underserved communities.

- **Addressing Social Determinants of Health:** Public health initiatives must go beyond the health care system itself and address the broader social issues that affect urban populations, such as poverty, housing insecurity, and education. By focusing on these areas, cities like Cleveland could see improvements in overall health outcomes.
- **Reducing Administrative Complexity:** Simplifying the U.S. health care system, reducing the number of plans and insurance complexities, would make the system more navigable for patients and providers alike. This could lead to greater efficiency and fewer barriers to care.

### Conclusion

The Mirror, Mirror 2024 report highlights significant shortcomings in the U.S. health care system, with particularly stark consequences for urban communities. In cities like Cleveland, where access to affordable care is already limited, the financial burden, administrative inefficiencies, and poor health outcomes exacerbate long-standing inequities.

Comprehensive reforms are essential to improving the health and well-being of America's urban populations.



## CHECK YOUR VOTER REGISTRATION STATUS


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Voters marked inactive by the Ohio Secretary of State are being removed from Ohio's voter database.  
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Deadline to Register to Vote is October 7, 2024



## Racism Takes a Back Seat to DEI



Staff Writer  
The Cleveland Observer

In recent years, diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) initiatives have become a central focus for organizations across various sectors, eclipsing the singular focus on racism, particularly anti-Black racism, in many corporate and institutional efforts. This shift reflects the expanded scope of DEI and its appeal to a broader audience. It also raises important questions about whether this approach dilutes the urgent need to address systemic racism in the U.S.

### Broader Scope and Institutional Appeal

One of the key reasons DEI has gained prominence is its broad framework. It addresses a range of marginalized identities, including race, gender, sexual orientation, disability and more. By encompassing multiple issues, DEI allows organizations to promote fairness and inclusivity across a wider spectrum, appealing to a more diverse audience.

According to Forbes, the business case for diversity is well-established. Research shows that companies with diverse leadership teams are 33% more likely to outperform their competitors. This economic justification makes DEI a practical and less controversial choice for companies compared to anti-racism efforts that could provoke a political and cultural backlash.

### Avoidance of Controversy

While confronting racism remains essential, particularly against African Americans, organizations may find DEI more palatable because it avoids direct



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confrontation with sensitive historical and cultural issues.

By focusing on diversity as a whole, companies can champion inclusivity without necessarily addressing the uncomfortable legacies of slavery, segregation and systemic inequality.

DEI could be a safer space for corporations because it allows them to look progressive without alienating certain segments of the population. Anti-racism requires acknowledging specific racial injustices, which can be divisive.

### The Challenge of Intersectionality

DEI frameworks also address the concept that examines how overlapping identities — such as race, gender, and class — interact to create unique experiences of oppression. This approach highlights the complexity of discrimination in a way that a singular focus on racism might not. According to Kimberlé Crenshaw, the scholar who coined the term intersectionality, “anti-

racism efforts often focus on the experiences of Black men or women in isolation. Intersectionality shows how, for example, Black women face compounded forms of discrimination based on both their race and gender.”

### Data and Impact

The priority of DEI over racism can be seen in corporate policies and trends. In 2020, following the racial justice protests after George Floyd’s murder, over 200 U.S. corporations pledged nearly \$50 billion toward racial equity. However, a 2023 report by McKinsey found that while 65% of companies increased DEI efforts, only 15% of that funding was specifically directed toward programs combating anti-Black racism.

Furthermore, the emphasis on DEI may not always translate into meaningful changes for Black Americans. A report by the National Bureau of Economic Research found that despite increased DEI

initiatives, the wealth gap between Black and white families in the U.S. remains six times greater, with no significant narrowing since the 1960s.

### Criticism and Pushback

Critics argue that the broad DEI framework often dilutes the urgent need to address specific racial inequalities, particularly for African Americans. By focusing on a wide range of diversity issues, there is a concern that the unique challenges posed by systemic racism are sidelined.

Marc Morial, President of the National Urban League, has frequently expressed concerns that many corporations have not fully delivered on the promises made after the racial reckoning following George Floyd’s death. He has criticized some companies for taking the easier path by making symbolic gestures without committing to substantial, long-term change. Morial continues to call for accountability and urges businesses to follow through with meaningful actions that address systemic injustices (*DefenderNetwork.com* /*National Urban League*).

While DEI has brought much-needed attention to a wide array of inequalities, there is a growing concern that its rise has overshadowed the focused fight against racism, especially for African Americans. To truly address racial bias, institutions must find a way to balance broader DEI goals with specific anti-racist actions that tackle the deep-rooted legacy of anti-Black racism in America.

By recognizing the distinct historical and social factors that fuel racism, particularly against African Americans, organizations can use DEI frameworks as a tool, not a substitute, for real, systemic change.

  
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## Supreme Court Ruling Sparks Anti-DEI Efforts, Congressional Black Caucus Responds



The Cleveland Observer

*Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) released its new corporate accountability report*

In June 2023, the U.S. Supreme Court's conservative supermajority issued a landmark decision in *Students for Fair Admissions v. Harvard College* striking down race-conscious admissions programs as a violation of the 14th Amendment's equal protection clause. This ruling has ignited a significant backlash against diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) initiatives, particularly affecting small Black and minority-owned businesses.

Following the ruling, former President Donald Trump and his MAGA Republican allies have intensified their campaign against DEI efforts. Edward Blum, the architect behind the *Students for Fair Admissions (SFFA)* case and organizations such as *America First Legal*, led by Trump advisor Stephen Miller, have launched a

controversial legal campaign that will dismantle diversity programs across corporate America, educational institutions and federal agencies.

As a result of this pushback, more than a dozen conservative attorney generals have threatened legal action against Fortune 500 companies over their DEI practices. Additionally, anti-DEI legislation targeting college admissions has been introduced in over 30 states, and in federal programs like the Small Business Administration's 8(a) Business Development program are under scrutiny. These actions put billions of dollars in federal contracts at risk for Black and minority-owned businesses.

In response to these challenges, the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) has developed a comprehensive strategy to protect and promote DEI initiatives and expand access to government contracting for Black business owners. As part of this strategy, the CBC issued a corporate accountability letter in December 2023 urging Fortune 500 companies to uphold their DEI commitments made in the wake of George Floyd's murder.

The CBC has since received a

significant response from corporate America. The organization has addressed hundreds of emails from companies, conducted over 50 meetings with corporate leaders and organized a briefing with more than 330 representatives from Fortune 500 companies to discuss advancing racial and economic equity.

### Key Findings:

- 1. Sectoral Representation:** Of the 189 organizations that provided documentation, the majority were from the manufacturing (31%), finance and insurance (25%), and information (16%) sectors.
- 2. Response Types:** Responses were submitted in various formats: disaggregated question-by-question (36.5%), aggregated responses in letter format (73%), and references to existing corporate DEI reports (63.5%).
- 3. Best Practices:** The report identifies best practices across 12 key areas, including leadership accountability, data disaggregation, culture and engagement, and progress on DEI commitments.
- 4. Cross-Industry Learning:** The analysis shows diverse



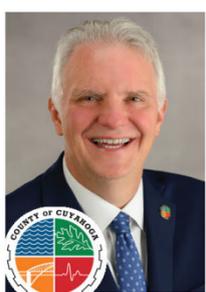
engagement patterns and documentation preferences, suggesting opportunities for cross-sector learning and sharing of best practices.

- 5. Progress and Opportunities:** While many organizations have made notable strides in their DEI efforts since 2020, there are still opportunities to convert DEI aspirations into actionable outcomes. The CBC remains committed to supporting companies in these endeavors.
- 6. As the debate over DEI continues,** the CBC's proactive measures underscore the ongoing struggle for racial and economic equity in the face of mounting opposition.

Scan Me For More Info!

# Cuyahoga Reads

Readers Win



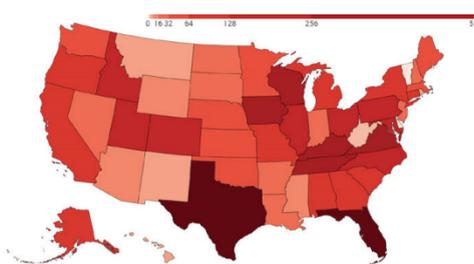
### A Message from County Executive Chris Ronayne

Cuyahoga Reads participants have been reading throughout the year! To date, 18,121 registered participants have completed 59,016,240 minutes, exceeding our goal of 5,000,000. The reading excitement doesn't end there - September is Library Card Sign-Up Month! Visit your local public library to renew or register for a new library card. Also, don't forget that September 22-28 is Banned Books Week. This week is a great opportunity to help our County libraries protect the right to read by borrowing a book.

#### Titles Challenged in Public Schools and Libraries During 2023

- Attempts to censor books during this period: 938
- Total titles challenged in those attempts: 9,021
- Unique Titles: 4,240

Data Compiled by: American Library Association - Office for Intellectual Freedom



### Freed Between The Lines

by Cuyahoga Reads Committee



The number of titles targeted for censorship surged by 65% in 2023

compared to years prior, reaching the highest levels ever documented by the American Library Association. Pressure groups in 2023 focused mostly on public libraries in addition to targeting school libraries. The number of titles targeted for censorship at public libraries increased by 92% over the previous year; school libraries saw an 11% increase. This Banned Books Week, take a moment to think about how life would be different without some of the most renowned stories and titles throughout the history of literature.

## Cuyahoga Reads Literacy Tips

**Library Card Sign-Up Month** is an annual campaign sponsored by the American Library Association to encourage readers of all ages to sign-up for a free library card. This September, "the American Library Association (ALA) is teaming up with multi-platform entertainment company Skybound Entertainment and leading toy and game company Hasbro to encourage people to roll out to their libraries with the TRANSFORMERS franchise, featuring Optimus Prime, as part of Library Card Sign-Up Month." To learn more about Library Card Sign-Up Month, visit [cuyahogareads.org](http://cuyahogareads.org).



# Lanternfly Invasion: What You Need to Know and Why You Should Squish Them

## SPOTTED LANTERNFLY

**THREAT LEVEL!**

It poses a threat to grapevines. Its preferred host is tree-of-heaven, but grapevine is its #2 preference



**WHAT IS IT?**

- The spotted lanternfly (*Lycorma delicatula*) is an invasive insect harming various plants by excreting sugary fluid that causes damaging sooty mold.
- When it feeds, it extracts sap and carbohydrates from plants, which causes damage.
- It primarily hosts on the tree of heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*).

## SPOTTED LANTERNFLY

**Locations and Reporting!**



- Call or email Plant Pest Control Section of the Ohio Department of Agriculture: (614) 728-6400 or [plantpest@agri.ohio.gov](mailto:plantpest@agri.ohio.gov)
- OR Report via mobile app: EDDMapS Great Lakes Early Detection Network




SCAN TO LISTEN

By Unity Powell  
The Cleveland Observer

While walking through the University Circle neighborhood, some children were at a park chasing a bug. Ah, kids enjoying the outdoors, But then I heard one of them say, “Yeah, you gotta squish it!” Intrigued, I walked over to see what the commotion was about. The kids pointed at a red and black, polka-dotted bug I had never seen before. It looked like a butterfly at first, but on closer inspection, maybe more of a moth, and there were several more of them fluttering around.

The children excitedly told me they’d learned in school that these bugs are causing big problems in the city. Their teachers had taught them that if they see one, they have to squish it. These aren’t just any bugs — they are spotted lanternflies, and they’re quickly becoming a major concern across Ohio.

Depending on your vantage point, these spotted lantern flies may be attractive or scary. Connie Hausman, Senior Conservation Science Manager at Cleveland Metroparks, explained how they’re working to control the spread of this invasive species.

“When you see it, just squish it,” Hausman said without mincing words. It might sound harsh, but the spotted lanternfly is a serious issue.

First seen in Pennsylvania around 2014, the spotted lanternfly hit Ohio in 2021. Originally from Asia, the insects likely made their

way to North America through shipping materials, and they’ve been slowly spreading ever since. Hausman explains that they’ve been bracing for its arrival for years.

“We’ve been identifying where the Tree of Heaven, the lanternfly’s favorite host, grows so we could keep an eye out,” Hausman said.

So, why the call to “just squish it?” Well, it turns out the spotted lanternfly is a master hitchhiker.

“These little guys can travel long distances,” Hausman said. “They’ll hop onto cars, trucks, or anything else that moves, and before you know it, they’ve made it across state lines.”

Once they settle in, the lanternflies can stress out trees by sucking out the sap, leaving them vulnerable. They love to feed on grapevines, apple trees and hops — crops that are big business in Ohio. Hausman explained that “we’re particularly concerned about how they might affect Ohio’s vineyards and orchards.”

Though lanternflies don’t bite or sting humans, their overwhelming numbers can make outdoor activities a lot less enjoyable.

“Imagine thousands of these bugs buzzing around while you’re trying to enjoy a nice day outside,” Hausman said. Beyond the annoyance, spotted lanternflies leave behind a sticky substance called honeydew, which creates a mess and attracts other pests, like wasps.

Megan Hart, a biologist with Lake Metroparks, said they are also closely monitoring the situation. While Lake Metroparks had its first confirmed sighting in August, Hart

is already taking steps to prevent the bugs from spreading further.

“We’ve been removing the Tree of Heaven, which is one of their favorite trees to feed on,” Hart explained. “It’s an invasive species itself, so we’re tackling two problems at once by getting rid of it.”

Both experts agree that the spotted lanternfly poses a threat not only to agriculture but also to native plants. “They can feed on our native grapevines and even maple trees,” Hart said. “While we haven’t seen much damage yet, we expect that to change as the population grows.”

The Ohio Department of Agriculture has been tracking the spread of the spotted lanternfly and has implemented quarantines to stop the bug from traveling beyond certain areas. But, as Hausman points out, the public plays a big role in controlling the spread as well. “Check your car before you leave an area where you might’ve seen these bugs,” she advises. “And if you see one, don’t hesitate to squish it.”

With the bugs now in their adult stage, they’re preparing to

lay eggs in October, which could mean even more lanternflies next year if left unchecked.

“We need to act now,” Hart urges. “The more we can control their numbers, the less damage we’ll see down the line.”

Despite the challenges, both Hart and Hausman are hopeful that with a combination of park management efforts and community involvement, Ohio can stay ahead of the problem.

“People have been great about reporting sightings, and that makes a huge difference,” Hausman said. “Together, we can manage this.”

So, it turns out the children were right and already doing their part to help protect Ohio’s environment. It’s not every day that a simple action like squishing a bug can make such a difference, but in this case, it really does.

**Update:** Quarantines are in effect in 12 Ohio counties, 4 of them in Northeast Ohio: Cuyahoga, Lorain, Columbiana and Mahoning as of this article, September 2024.

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TCO Survey