



Inside

Sugar is an Acquired Taste: Can You Break the Cycle?

Many people can limit their consumption of sugar. A teaspoon or two in their morning coffee is sufficient. Others are obsessed with that sugary taste and crave it constantly. Page 3



CLEVELAND OBSERVER

Since 2018

Vol. 5 Issue 10 November 2024

WWW.CLEOBSERVER.COM

Cleveland City Council Redistricting Update



By Lisa O'Brien

CLEVELAND — As the year draws to a close, Cleveland City Council is nearing the deadline for its first draft of the redistricting map. Councilman Michael Polensek, representing Ward 8, reported to The Cleveland Observer, that as of Oct. 3, the Council had not yet seen a draft and lacked an estimated timeline for its arrival from the Triad Research Group.

On Oct. 7, Council announced community feedback meetings scheduled for Oct. 15-17 at three locations. These meetings allowed residents to voice their thoughts and submit their map designs using the Dave's Redistricting web app.

A "Frequently Asked Questions" document released by the Council addressed concerns about the timeline for redistricting.

It emphasized the importance of community input and the need for the process to conclude by year's end, allowing residents ample time to prepare for upcoming elections.

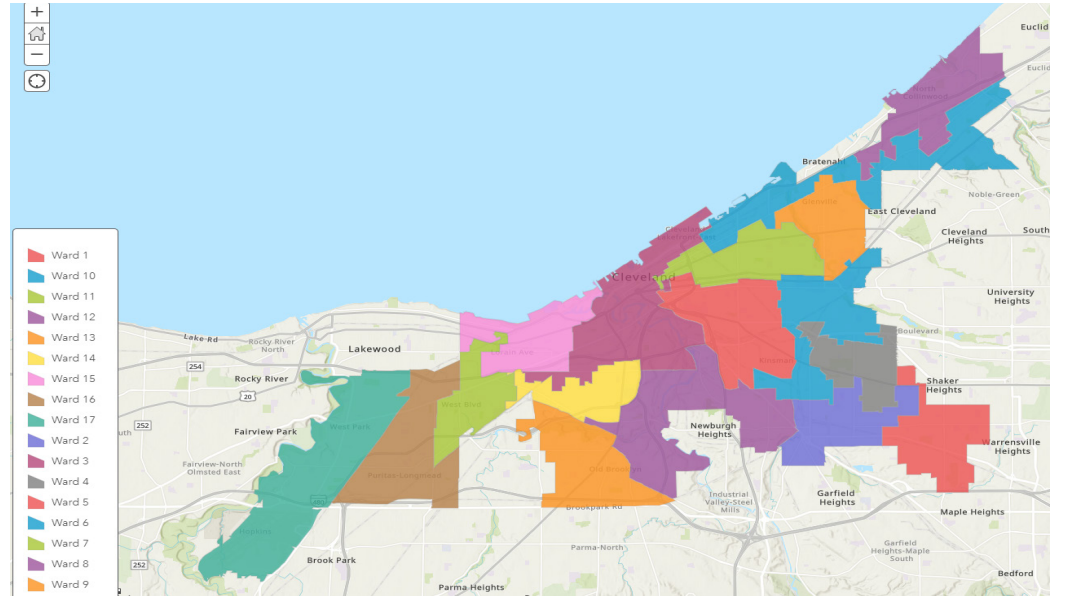
Cleveland City Council says it is working to ensure the redistricting process is completed by the end of the year. According to the Cleveland City Council website, this urgency is partly due to delays caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The new maps must be adopted in time for potential candidates to meet the filing deadline for the 2025 municipal elections, which is June 11, 2025.

Completing the process early will give residents adequate time to review the new wards and decide whether to run for office.

Additionally, in June, consultants began meeting with Council members to gather their input.

Feedback from the community, council members, demographic data, and equitable distribution of resources will all be considered in drafting the



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

new maps. The FAQ documents are available on the City Council website, and the meetings can be watched virtually on YouTube or residents can RSVP for a Facebook livestream.

Polensek noted that a significant challenge arises from underreporting in the census, complicating representation in neighborhoods, particularly on the city's east side.

What's the Takeaway?

Though questions may remain unanswered, one thing is clear, citizen input matters. TCO encourages readers to reach out to City Council members and be heard inside and outside meetings.

Additionally, the redistricting process is a reminder that representation matters.

In his response to TCO,

Continued on page 5

Feeling stressed about the election? Here's what some are doing and what they say you can do too



By Mariam Fam Associated Press

If the high stakes presidential election is causing troublesome thoughts, existential dread or rifts with loved ones, there's no need to white knuckle through it. Take a deep breath. Literally.

Meditation and mindfulness teacher Rosie Acosta says focusing on each inhale and exhale can help regain that grounding sense of control that may be drowned out by the spiraling uncertainty of election season. Experts like Acosta, who works in Southern California for Headspace, a mental health company and app, want those struggling to know there are ways to lighten election-induced stress and navigate related tensions.

"I can control how I'm breathing. ... I can use my mindfulness practice and stay in the present moment, instead of worrying about what the outcome is going to be with an election," said Acosta, who contributed the guided meditations "Surviving

Dinner Table Debates" and "Compassion During Campaign Season" to Headspace's "politics without panic" collection.

"You forget how much power we actually have over this tension and this anxiety."

This year's campaign has already witnessed unexpected twists and turns with President Joe Biden's exit from the race and Vice President Kamala Harris' quick ascendance among Democrats as well as assassination attempts targeting Republican presidential nominee former President Donald Trump.

And roughly three in four American adults believe the upcoming presidential election is vital to the future of U.S. democracy, although which candidate they think poses the greater threat depends on their political leanings, according to a survey from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research.

Mindfulness and setting boundaries

Acosta recalled how, back in 2016, political divisions seeped into a Christmas family gathering, turning an occasion for joy, connection and nostalgia



ChatGPT created Graphic

into a "ground for verbal war."

In navigating the aftermath, she said she learned to establish boundaries in the relationship with a relative and to focus on things that brought them together, rather than drew them apart. That could mean saying "We're not talking about this right now; let's talk about something else," disengaging from an unhelpful conversation, ignoring a sent political meme, she said, or bringing up a shared memory, instead of discussing the latest news.

"Mindfulness and meditation really help us reframe our relationships — our relationships in general, but, specifically, our relationship

to our thoughts," she said.

Headspace has also partnered with When We all Vote, a national nonpartisan voting initiative created by former first lady Michelle Obama, to provide eligible voters with some free resources to ease election-season anxiety. There's a stress quiz to determine if you're "the collected constituent," "the overwhelmed optimist," "the weary worrier," or "the politically panicked." The partnership also includes a voting registration portal.

"This is really intended to reach folks regardless of political affiliation or points of view," said Headspace's president, Christine Continued on page 2

## Feeling stressed about the election?

From front page

Evans. "Regardless of who you are, you deserve mental health and support when you need it."

### Skills for disagreeing better

The Rev. Cynthia O'Brien often sees some people getting especially nervous around Thanksgiving.

"Thanksgiving is people you love, but you might not see all the time," she said. "I hear people saying, 'Oh, my relatives in Texas think I have gone off the deep end, that they won't talk to me,' or 'my sister-in-law and I aren't speaking' and it's simply the political polarization that has come between."

One suggestion, she said, is not to have such conversations at the dinner table and opt instead for one-on-one chats.

O'Brien is no stranger to being in a room with people with different ideologies.

Based in Oregon, she's the pastor of First Presbyterian Church of Woodburn and Aurora Presbyterian Church, with small congregations that include conservatives and progressives.

She's also a national debate chair and a workshop moderator with Braver Angels, a nonprofit that does depolarization work. Workshops she moderates include ones teaching skills for disagreeing better.

"We're not trying to smooth over differences. We're teaching skills to bring out the differences in a responsible, loving, caring way," she said.

Goals include having more understanding of the values and concerns of those who differ politically. Workshop participants are taught to listen carefully, acknowledge the other's view before sharing their own, pivot to signal they're about to share theirs and exchange perspectives such as by sharing a personal story behind their viewpoint or the source of information for their position.

They're instructed to let go of the expectation of convincing others that they're wrong.

"Our democracy requires us to talk through the disagreement and not just to shout at each other," O'Brien said.

### Normalizing the experience and practicing self-care

Dr. Petros Levounis, professor and chair of the Department of Psychiatry at Rutgers New Jersey Medical School, said "people who feel



particularly anxious about the election should rest assured that they are not alone."

He stressed the importance of taking care of one's physical health, getting enough sleep, eating well and exercising regularly. While such practices may sound "a little banal," he said, "they're just so central to our well-being."

Also, make time to relax and "perhaps having some breathing exercises, meditation, mindfulness; these are things that people have found quite helpful."

Levounis cautioned against relying on alcohol to calm nerves, saying it "invariably increases anxiety in the long run and I'm not talking about months and years. ... A few hours after heavy consumption of alcohol, the anxiety increases."

In the cases when anxiety becomes debilitating and is interfering with work or life at home, he recommends talking to a mental health professional or one's primary care physician.

### Taking action and being mindful of news intake, social media use

Some universities have also been providing their students with resources to manage election stress.

"We definitely have some students that really think a lot about politics and are aware of how that impacts them," said Shauna Olson Hong, director of counseling services at California State University, East Bay. Those include some from LGBTQ+ communities or who are undocumented or have family members who are, she said.

The counseling center has been offering tips online. Those include limiting news intake, being especially careful about checking news immediately before sleep, vetting news sources to

follow reputable ones and being mindful of social media use.

Other suggestions include seeking support and thinking about ways to be engaged and to affect positive change while maintaining balance.

"Just sitting around and worrying and feeling like I don't have any control over what's going to happen to me is a terrible place to sit and I think that really builds our anxiety," said Hong. "So trying to take realistic action to speak out for what we believe in."

*Associated Press religion coverage receives support through the AP's collaboration with The Conversation US, with funding from Lilly Endowment Inc. The AP is solely responsible for this content.*

## SUBSCRIBE SCAN HERE:



SCAN TO REGISTER

**\$55**  
Annual  
Direct U.S. Mail

### CLEVELAND OBSERVER

The Cleveland Observer is a community-based non-profit monthly newspaper dedicated to providing information and resources that will uplift and enhance the community.  
Copyright 2024

**PUBLISHER**  
Ron Calhoun

**MANAGING EDITOR**  
Imani Capri

**PRINT EDITOR**  
Rosie Palfy

**EDITOR**  
T.C. Lewis  
Marva B. White

**PARTNERS**  
The Cleveland Foundation  
Euclid/Collinwood Observer

**ADVERTISING**  
info@theclevelandobserver.com

**ADVISORY BOARD**  
Sheila Ferguson,  
Ron Harris, Devon Jones,  
Mark Silverberg

**PRINT LAYOUT / GRAPHICS**  
Ron Calhoun

info@cleobserver.com  
11459 Mayfield Road #302  
Cleveland, Ohio 44106  
(216) 236-8081

The views and opinions expressed in this publication are those of each writer, and not those of the publisher, editor or any other entity.

### Article Submission Policy

The Cleveland Observer will consider article submissions electronically via email or through theclevelandobserver.com. Registration required. Submitter must provide name, e-mail address, and phone number with submission.

**NO REPRODUCTION WITHOUT PERMISSION.**

### CONVERSATIONS IN COURAGE WITH IMANI CAPRI

The #1 Platform Celebrating Courage, Resilience, Healing and Transformation

"WITH COURAGE YOU CAN DO ANYTHING!"



DR. KARIM R. ELLIS  
CO-HOST  
#1 BREAKTHROUGH STRATEGIST

IMANI CAPRI  
HOST  
#1 ENERGY ELEVATION COACH

DR. SHAMAN RAH  
CO-HOST  
SHAMAN, TEACHER, COACH

Listen Worldwide:  
www.WOVU.org / The WOVU App  
11am EST | Tuesdays |



Connect With Me:

@iam\_ianicapri Imani Capri - Radio Host Imani Capri

## We Buy houses! Cash/Fast and Fair offer!

DanDantheRealEstateMan@gmail.com

216-780-0413

## Understanding Sugar and Its Impact on Your Health



By Sharon Lewis, MEd, CFNC

For many people, a teaspoon of sugar in their morning coffee is enough to satisfy their craving. But for others, sugar becomes an obsession, leading to constant cravings. Some people even develop a dependence on sugar, experiencing withdrawal symptoms when they try to cut back. Sugar addiction can have a significant impact on overall health.

- Raw sugar
- Brown sugar
- Corn syrup and high-fructose corn syrup
- Molasses
- Glucose, fructose, and sucrose
- Fruit juice concentrate

To learn more about the differences between natural and processed sugars, see CNET's guide.

### Effects on Health

Simple carbohydrates are rapidly absorbed, causing quick spikes in blood sugar levels, which may leave you feeling tired, weak, or thirsty afterward.

blood cells, also known as “killer cells,” are significantly impacted by high sugar intake.

As Dr. Michael Roizen, Chief Wellness Officer Emeritus at the Cleveland Clinic and co-author of *RealAge*, explains, sugar can hinder the immune system by reducing the effectiveness of white blood cells in destroying harmful bacteria and viruses. Studies have also shown that high blood sugar levels impair the immune response in people with diabetes, increasing the risk of complications from infections such as COVID-19.

Though sugar addiction is not officially classified as a medical condition, overconsumption of sugar has been linked to several life-threatening conditions and can depress the immune system, including:

- Weight gain and obesity due to its high-calorie content and lack of nutritional value]
- Insulin resistance, a precursor to Type 2 diabetes
- Increased risk of heart disease, including hypertension and high cholesterol
- Non-alcoholic fatty liver disease (NAFLD)
- Impaired cognitive function, with a potential increased

- risk of Alzheimer's disease
- Higher risk of depression and anxiety disorders
- Increased risk of inflammatory bowel diseases like Crohn's disease
- Development of colon cancer
- Tooth decay and cavities

### Additional Resources:

*Encyclopedia Britannica: What is Sugar?*

*CNET: The Difference Between Natural and Processed Sugars*

*Healthline: How Much Fiber Per Day?*

*Healthline: Resistant Starch 101*

# BREAKING SUGAR ADDICTION



### What is Sugar?

According to Encyclopædia Britannica, “Chemically, sugar is any one of the numerous sweet, colorless, water-soluble compounds present in the sap of seed plants and the milk of mammals.” Sucrose, the most common sugar, is a widely used industrial sweetener found in many foods and beverages. Sugar is also a component of carbohydrates.

### Understanding Carbohydrates

Carbohydrates, often referred to as “carbs,” are an essential nutrient found in various foods. While bread, pasta, and sweets are common sources, carbohydrates are also found in dairy products, fruits, vegetables, grains, nuts, legumes, and seeds.

Carbohydrates are made up of three components: fiber, starch, and sugar. Fiber and starch are complex carbohydrates that take longer for the body to break down and offer more health benefits. Sugar, a simple carbohydrate, is quickly absorbed by the body, providing a rapid energy boost. The nutrient quality of a food depends on the balance of fiber, starch, and sugar it contains. Simple sugars, however, provide little to no nutritional value.

The Standard American Diet (SAD) is heavily laden with simple carbohydrates, as sugar is added to nearly every processed food. Common examples of added sugars include:

Long-term consumption of simple carbohydrates is linked to several chronic health conditions, including:

- Cardiovascular disease
- Obesity
- Tooth decay
- Vision loss
- Kidney disease
- High blood pressure
- Sleep apnea
- High cholesterol
- Non-alcoholic fatty liver disease
- Osteoarthritis
- Polycystic ovary syndrome
- Asthma

When consumed, simple carbohydrates trigger the pancreas to produce insulin, the hormone that allows blood sugar to enter cells for energy. The more simple carbs you eat, the more insulin your body needs. Over time, your pancreas may struggle to produce enough insulin, potentially leading to Type 2 diabetes. Learn more about the role of fiber and resistant starch in preventing these effects at Healthline's fiber guide and Healthline's resistant starch 101.

### How Sugar Affects the Immune System

Beyond its role in chronic diseases, excess sugar consumption can also weaken the immune system, reducing the body's ability to fight off viruses and bacterial infections. White

## There is hope.

**988**  
SUICIDE  
& CRISIS  
LIFELINE

### Need Support Now?

If you or someone you know is struggling or in crisis, help is available. Call or text 988 or chat 988lifeline.org.

988 offers 24/7 access to trained crisis counselors who can help individuals experiencing mental health-related distress.

That could be:

- Thoughts of suicide
- Mental health or substance use crisis, or
- Any other kind of emotional distress

**ADAMHS**  
BOARD OF CUYAHOGA COUNTY  
ALCOHOL, DRUG ADDICTION & MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES



# Legal Aid Low Income Taxpayer Clinic Can Help Resolve Tax Issues



By Tonya Sams

Receiving a notification from the IRS can cause anxiety and fear. These feelings can be magnified when someone cannot afford an attorney to resolve their tax issues. The Legal Aid Low Income Taxpayer Clinic (LITC) can help taxpayers with their tax problems for free.

The LITC assists low-income taxpayers in Ashtabula, Cuyahoga, Geauga, Lake, and Lorain Counties.

“Our clinics help individuals only. We focus on tax controversies involving the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) and sometimes the Ohio Department of Taxation and not on tax preparation,” said Dennis Dobos, Supervising Attorney in the Economic Justice Practice Group at Legal Aid.

“The LITC can assist taxpayers with an income up to 250% of the federal poverty line, which is around \$37,650 for an individual and \$78,000 for a family

of four. The amount in controversy for a given tax year should be under \$50,000.”

Dennis and other attorneys who are part of the LITC have helped taxpayers who have not filed taxes in many years and others who missed the response or appeal period or lost supporting documents necessary to resolve their cases with the IRS.



The Legal Aid Society of Cleveland  
Since 1905

“Legal Aid can help with IRS audits and appeals, collection due process hearings, identity theft, preparer fraud, innocent spouse, underreporting of income, earned income tax credit, child tax credit and more,” said Dennis.

LITC attorneys also can help taxpayers obtain transcripts from the IRS, negotiate payment plans, currently not collectible status, and offer in compromise. They can represent taxpayers in court through lawsuits against the IRS

and the U.S. The LITC attorneys additionally seek systemic issues and solutions to help low-income taxpayers.

Dennis offers several tips to help people with their taxes.

“Open your mail from the IRS and look for response deadlines. Use certified mailing when responding to the IRS. Also, select your tax preparer wisely.

also catch up on missing returns and seek collection alternatives to address tax debt if they cannot pay it. Returns must be filed 3 years from the due date to receive a refund.

Taxpayers should not assume that because they have not heard from the IRS within a few years they have avoided a tax debt collection. The IRS has 10 years from the time of assessment to collect the debt. It is also important to keep good records because the IRS may have made a mistake. Those records could support your case if you are accused of owing money to the IRS.

Are you experiencing tax issues? Legal Aid may be able to help! To apply for assistance, call 1 888-817-3777, or complete an online intake 24/7 at lasclev.org.

Tonya Sams is a Development & Communications Manager at The Legal Aid Society of Cleveland.

You can use the volunteer income tax assistance (VITA) sites to help you do this. They are free and supervised by the IRS.”

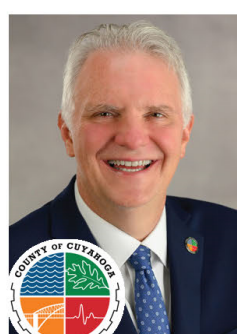
It is also important to look out for tax fraud. Fraud can be avoided by not responding to emails or phone calls from people claiming to be from the IRS. The IRS initiates contact with taxpayers through regular or certified mailings using the U.S. Postal Service. Taxpayers should

Scan Me For More Info!

## Cuyahoga Reads

Readers Win

CuyahogaReads.org



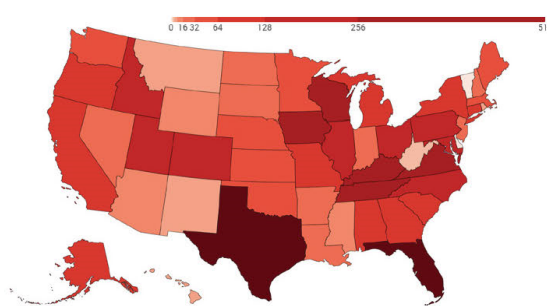
### A Message from County Executive Chris Ronayne

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).



## Avoid Overeating During the Holidays: Five Simple Tips



By Sharon Lewis, MEd, CFNC

The holiday season, from November to the New Year, is packed with family gatherings and parties—many of which center around food and drink. The challenge? Avoiding the temptation to overindulge in festive treats and beverages.

Here are five tips to help you navigate the season with mindfulness, self-control, and a plan for success.

### 1. Don't deprive yourself

The holidays are a time to enjoy food with loved ones, but don't starve yourself all day to make room for a big meal. Instead, eat smaller, balanced meals before the event. Snack on fibrous fruits and vegetables, nuts, Greek yogurt, and light protein to curb your appetite. 'This can help you avoid overeating at the main meal. Learn more tips from Atrium Health Wake Forest Baptist on preventing overeating during the holidays.

### 2. Start your exercise routine now

Don't wait for extra pounds to pile up before taking action.



Start exercising now to burn calories and prevent weight gain. Whether it's walking, joining a gym, or taking an aerobics class, find an activity you enjoy and commit to it three to four times a week. Regular exercise can help you maintain your weight, sleep better, and feel better overall. Here are more ideas on how to stop overeating and stay healthy through the holidays.

### 3. Use a smaller plate

If you're thinking about getting seconds, wait about 20 minutes before returning for more food. It takes approximately that long for your brain to register that your stomach is full. After waiting, you might realize you're no longer hungry and can skip the extra

serving. This trick is backed by science.

### 4. Remove "diet" from your vocabulary

Diets often lead to weight regain because they can create a sense of deprivation. Instead of going on a restrictive diet, work toward a balanced eating plan that allows for occasional indulgences. This can help prevent feelings of deprivation and make it easier to maintain your weight. Learn why diets don't work long-term.

### 5. Get plenty of sleep

Research has shown that lack of sleep can lead to weight gain by disrupting hormone levels, making you feel hungrier and less satisfied. Prioritize good sleep

to help control your appetite and support your weight-loss efforts. Check out the 13 effects of sleep deprivation, according to the Cleveland Clinic.

**Bottom line:** You have the tools to avoid holiday weight gain. Start using these strategies now to make smart choices and stay healthy throughout the season.

### Additional Resources:

- Avoiding Overeating During the Holidays* | Atrium Health Wake Forest Baptist
- 10 Tips to Stop Overeating During the Holidays (and Beyond)*
- 13 Effects of Sleep Deprivation* | Cleveland Clinic

**WRITERS  
PODCASTERS  
VIDEOGRAPHERS  
BLOGGERS  
GET PAID\$\$\$**

Email us at:  
[Info@theclevelandobserver.com](mailto:Info@theclevelandobserver.com)

Phone:  
**(216) 236-8081**

**THE CLEVELAND OBSERVER**

**WE'RE HIRING**

**JOIN OUR TEAM**

Journalists  
Editors  
Content Creators  
**Freelance, Remote**

**APPLY NOW**  
[cleobserver.com/job-openings](http://cleobserver.com/job-openings)

## Cleveland City Council Redistricting Update

From front page

Polensek also explained that when residents do not correctly fill out the census, it complicates the type of representation their neighborhoods receive.

"The challenge we have is that there has been substantial population loss in large sections of the eastside as a result of many of our residents not complying with the last census. Therefore, it becomes quite challenging, specifically on the southeast and northeast side to keep identifiable neighborhoods together," Polensek said.

### Additional Resources:

**Dave's Redistricting Web App:**  
<https://davesredistricting.org/maps#home>

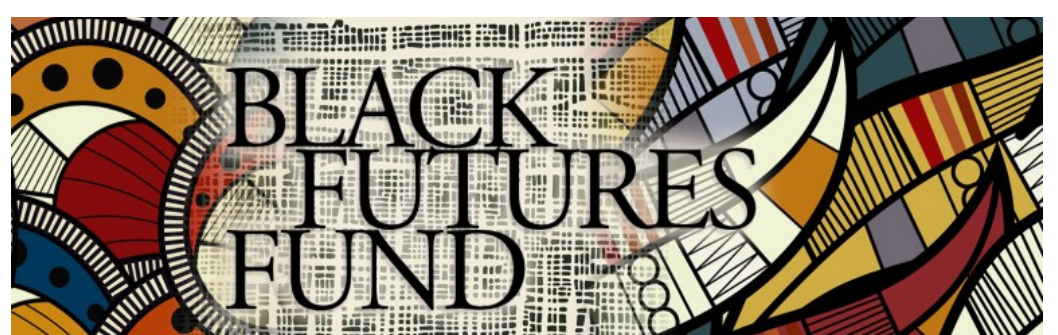
### Cleveland City Council and Redistricting:

<https://www.clevelandcitycouncil.org/cleveland-city-council-begins-redistricting-process-selection-consulting-team>

### Cleveland City Council - Community Input Sessions:

<https://www.clevelandcitycouncil.org/sites/default/files/Community%20Input%20Sessions.pdf>

*Lisa O'Brien is a recent graduate of Case Western Reserve University with degrees in Theatre and International Studies. She has experience in arts administration, marketing, and event planning. A published playwright and journalistic writer, she co-wrote an original musical that won the Baker Nord Center for the Humanities "Humanities Prize."*



## Artificial Intelligence: What Land Banks Can Learn



By Lucia Walinchus

*This project was funded by a grant from the Pulitzer Center and provided by Eye on Ohio, the nonprofit, nonpartisan Ohio Center for Journalism. Please join the free mailing list for Eye on Ohio as this helps provide more public-service reporting.*

Meredith Broussard notes in her book, “Artificial Unintelligence” that “AI” is a bit of a misnomer. True artificial intelligence means computers have finally achieved consciousness. Scientists are a long way away - if that is even possible.

Why then has “artificial intelligence” become ubiquitous? Major companies and the state of Ohio refer to AI as vital to speech recognition, self-driving cars, and web searches. It is shorthand for various machine-learning methods to solve a problem a human can’t easily solve.

For example, a programmer has to code image-recognition software to identify dogs in pictures. How can the programmer explain to a computer what a dog is? Chihuahuas are dogs, and so are Great Danes. But not wolves, which look a lot like dogs, or foxes.

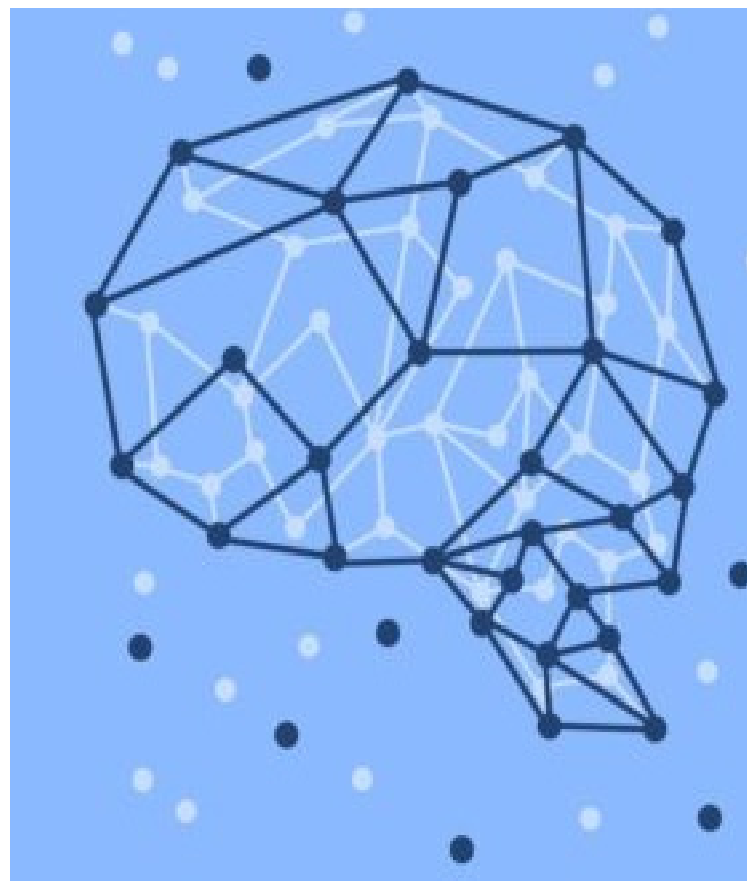
The programmer instead could use thousands of pictures of animals hand-labeled “dogs” and “foxes” and have an AI algorithm learn which are which. The computer compares patterns of each animal’s eyes, nose, and snout to see which sizes and shapes are a dog. The code tells the computer to decide a shape, such as a dog ear, is more likely a dog.

As François Chollet and J.J. Allaire wrote in their book, “Deep Learning with R”, from a geometric standpoint, the computer is trying to see how to fold a piece of paper so that the maximum number of data points can be included.

Counterintuitively though, extremely high accuracy is not an end goal because of “overfitting.” A model that follows data too closely might not be good at making predictions in new data it hasn’t seen before. If your dog dataset has too few Chihuahuas and not enough Great Danes, you might miss bigger dogs later.

AI is powerful because it handles computer programming differently. Instead of telling the machine what’s important, programmers study the data points that influence various outcomes to see what’s important. Then they test for better outcomes.

How can cities and land banks choose to take over decrepit



### Artificial Intelligence

[är-tə-'fi-shəl in-'te-lə-jən(t)s]

The simulation of human intelligence by software-coded heuristics.

properties? This effort involved hundreds of public-records act requests, 5,225 lines of code, and countless hours of planning, researching, programming, writing, fact-checking, and editing.

With countless articles chronicling rising housing prices, let’s look at the opposite end of the spectrum. What happens to the worst housing? How does that impact people who are struggling?

In Ohio, the county keeps delinquent property lists showing which owners did not pay taxes the previous year and how much they owe. An auditor’s website lets anyone see property value and payment history.

Most delinquent taxpayers eventually pay back their taxes. However, the research started here for several reasons.

First, it would be impractical to study every property in a county to see which might be eligible for a land bank. The delinquent taxpayer list is a public record that represents virtually all decrepit properties in a county.

Second, delinquent property owners are the biggest funders of land banks in the first place. County treasurers and prosecutors split 5% of delinquent tax revenue between them in a delinquent tax and assessment collection fund (DTAC.) When a county establishes a land bank, it uses those funds. County commissioners can authorize up to 5% more.

When a taxpayer becomes delinquent, the county treasurer usually will set up a payment plan. If that fails, the government will sell its tax lien to a third party. But sometimes not even that is successful, particularly for abandoned properties where it can be difficult to first find an owner’s heirs or successors in interest.

Land banks get properties in a variety of ways. Someone can give them a parcel outright or deed property instead of foreclosure.

But usually, they remediate properties that are way behind on their taxes in the first place.

The thrust of the project is, of all delinquent properties in a county, which ones go to the land bank? Each has a policy that essentially says, “We try to do the best we can with our limited budget.” What exactly does that mean, mathematically?

Land banks are great but the program is limited. How do officials choose which of the relatively small number of properties they will foreclose upon or demolish?

During the height of the mortgage crisis, many counties got federal funds to supplement their budgets. That money is now largely gone. How will land banks treat rusting properties with a smaller budget?

**Additional resources:**

**Artificial Intelligence:**  
<https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/36722634-artificial-unintelligence>

**Ohio and AI:**  
<https://www.cleveland.com/news/2021/12/ohio-legislation-seeks-to-streamline-state-laws-rules-flagged-by-artificial-intelligence.html>

**Deep Learning with R:**  
<https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/38451327-deep-learning-with-r>

**Treasurer’s delinquent tax and assessment collection fund; prosecuting attorney’s delinquent tax and assessment collection fund:**  
<https://codes.ohio.gov/ohio-revised-code/section-321.261>

**theclevelandobserver.com**

**A GREAT WAY TO INFORM THE COMMUNITY**

**YOUR ARTICLE PUBLISHED NEXT MONTH !**

**Call 216-236-8082**

Email us at [info@theclevelandobserver.com](mailto:info@theclevelandobserver.com)

### Cleveland Observer Corrections

On page 3 of the October 2024 print edition, it was incorrectly stated that Cleveland City Council passed an emergency ordinance authorizing police officers to assist in the 2025 presidential inauguration in Washington, D.C. The legislation is still under review.

Additionally, quotes attributed to Councilman Michael D. Polensek and Council President Blaine A. Griffin regarding the ordinance were inaccurate. We apologize for the error and for any confusion this may have caused.

— The Cleveland Observer Staff

## Better Business Bureau Warns of Scams Surrounding Medicare Open Enrollment



TCO Staff/ChatGPT

Medicare open enrollment runs from Oct. 15 through Dec. 7, and scammers are using this period to trick people out of money and personal information.

BBB Scam Tracker frequently receives reports from consumers about scam calls and text messages from individuals posing as Medicare representatives. Consumers report receiving calls from individuals claiming to be “healthcare benefits advocates” working with healthcare or insurance providers.

Scammers often make enticing claims about better, cheaper programs or use threats of discontinued services. Once consumers provide personal information, they become vulnerable to identity theft and fraud.

A Westlake woman shared her experience with a healthcare scam. She received a call from a man who claimed to be with Medicare and provided her Social

Security number and home address as proof of legitimacy. While the scammer had the correct Social Security number, the address was incorrect. The woman said, “(The scammer) told me I needed additional Medicare coverage. I knew immediately it was a scam and hung up.” She called the number back and heard a recording saying, “Welcome to Health Guard. Please hang on for our next representative,” but no one answered. The woman then reported the scam to BBB.

BBB Serving Greater Cleveland offers the following tips to help consumers avoid open enrollment scams:

- Be cautious of unsolicited contacts. Medicare and healthcare plan representatives won’t contact you by phone, email, or in person unless you are already enrolled. Be especially wary of threatening calls that demand immediate action or payment.
- Protect your personal information. Never provide your Medicare ID number, Social Security number, health plan details, credit card numbers, or banking information to anyone you don’t know.
- Use official websites. You

can enroll or re-enroll in Medicare at Medicare.gov or in a marketplace health plan at Healthcare.gov. For private insurance, use the website listed on the back of your insurance card.

- Avoid promotional gifts in exchange for personal information. Be suspicious if someone offers gifts, health screenings, or medical equipment in exchange for personal information, such as your Medicare ID or Social Security number.

If you are unsure whether a call or offer is legitimate or if you have shared your personal information with someone claiming to be from Medicare, call 1-800-MEDICARE to report

it. If you suspect fraud while signing up for ACA coverage, visit Healthcare.gov or call the Health Insurance Marketplace at 1 800-318-2596.

For more tips on avoiding healthcare scams, visit BBB.org. If you’ve been a victim of a scam, report it to BBB.org/ScamTracker. Your report can help others avoid falling victim to similar scams.

*Additional resources:*  
 BBB Scam Tracker  
<https://www.bbb.org/ScamTracker>  
 Medicare.gov  
<https://www.medicare.gov/Healthcare.gov>  
<https://www.healthcare.gov/BBB.org>  
<https://www.bbb.org/>

**We need your feedback**

**Take the Survey**



**TCO Survey**

## How Cleveland Youth Feel About Gun Violence



By Sarai Murdock



CLEVELAND — Following the Apalachee High School shooting in Georgia, gun laws and U.S. citizens’ access to firearms have become a major topic of discussion. In Ohio, you must be 18 to purchase a firearm and 21 to buy a handgun.

“I grew up around guns all of my life,” 19-year-old Harvey Newberry said. A traveling photographer based in Cleveland, Newberry is pro-gun. As a young child to a father who served in the military, he was educated about guns and gun safety at a young age.

“Getting educated from somebody with a military background has played a major role in my perspective today,” Newberry said. He owns a gun for protection.

“You never know what kind of situation you might get put in, especially living in Cleveland, I mean, things happen every day.”

Twenty-year-old Michelle Langston, a local model, feels the

same way. While she is pro-gun, she would like to see changes in gun laws for the safety of the community. “I feel like people wouldn’t feel the need to have guns if people took mass shootings and school shootings more seriously. Or if the communities were built better and if people had housing,” she said.

Langston has been grabbed and followed while walking alone. “There are times where I’ve even been followed and if I turn the wrong corner I don’t know if something’s gonna happen. So, I feel like, if I had a gun and someone was following me, I feel a bit more confident in turning any corner.”

Miah Lewis-Kelly, an 18-year-old college freshman, has a different perspective.

“Even if you’re using a gun properly and you’re trying to inflict harm on a person for a specific reason, innocent people can be around and they can still be affected by the remnants of that,” Lewis-Kelly said. “Hearing that can be very traumatic for people. So, even mentally, I feel like they can cause harm to innocent people.” She believes gun violence can contribute to post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and anxiety.



[www.freepik.com/macrovector](http://www.freepik.com/macrovector)

Moving to Atlanta in August to attend Spelman College as a biology major made her realize Cleveland’s effect on her.

“Seeing how others react to wanting to leave campus because they’re scared of violence, as opposed to me not really feeling scared, has definitely made me think about being a product of my environment,” Lewis-Kelly said.

Growing up in Cleveland Heights and learning about the safety concerns her high school,

Cleveland Heights High School (CHHS), was having, she realized how important it is that young people in Cleveland know that they can do better and have a future ahead of them. She especially felt this way after experiencing a safety alert at her college when someone from a separate shooting attempted to hide on school grounds.

According to WKYC, there

*Continued on page 8*

## Cleveland Rape Crisis Center Marks 50th Anniversary, Welcomes New CEO



By Jeanne Van Atta

CLEVELAND — The Cleveland Rape Crisis Center (CRCC) is celebrating its 50th anniversary and has appointed Nicole McKinney-Johnson as its new president and CEO, marking her as the first African American to hold the position.

Since opening its hotline in 1974, CRCC has transformed the landscape for survivors of rape and sexual assault. Before its inception, many survivors faced a culture of silence and shame. The center's founders broke that silence, creating a lifeline for those seeking support and validation.

CRCC has played a pivotal role in educating the public about the nature and impact of sexual assault, challenging long-held myths that often complicate survivors' willingness to seek help. It highlights that many assaults occur between individuals who know each other, further complicating the dialogue around trust and betrayal.

Over the years, CRCC has expanded its services from peer counseling to professional therapy, medical assistance, and legal support. Staff members accompany survivors to emergency rooms and court proceedings, ensuring they are supported throughout their healing journey.

The center's Faces of

### Nicole McKinney-Johnson Named President & CEO of Cleveland Rape Crisis Center



Change program empowers survivors to share their stories publicly, fostering both personal healing and broader awareness. Currently, CRCC handles an average of 300 hotline calls each month, including about 20 related to human trafficking.

Recent high-profile cases, such as that of Deshaun Watson, have highlighted the challenges survivors face in coming forward. As community engagement director Donisha Greene noted, the intense focus on celebrity often overshadows the voices of survivors. "They pushed decency away and got behind the celebrity and the money," she said.

Amid these challenges, CRCC remains committed to empowering survivors. "It's about empowerment," Greene emphasized.

McKinney-Johnson previously served as interim CEO while the board conducted its search for a permanent leader. She brings extensive experience in human resources and development, previously holding roles as chief people officer and director of human resources for a construction management firm. She is also a well-regarded board member at CRCC.

The CRCC headquarters is located at the PIVOT Center, 2937 West 25th St., with additional satellite offices in Shaker Square, Clark-Fulton, Mentor, Ashtabula, and Chardon. Its full-service human trafficking drop-in center is at 10450 Superior Ave.

The CRCC's Crisis & Support Hotline provides 24/7, free, and confidential support for survivors of sexual violence and their loved

ones.

To reach the hotline, call or text 215-619-6192 or 440-423-2020, or chat online at [clevelandrapecrisis.org](http://clevelandrapecrisis.org).

Jeanne Van Atta is a professional photographer, former reporter for the Cleveland Call & Post, and Vice-President of Restore Cleveland Hope. A dedicated advocate, she co-founded the Cleveland Rape Crisis Center and played a pivotal role in supporting Joan Southgate's 2002 journey, retracing freedom seekers' paths through the Ohio Underground Railroad. Jeanne's commitment to social justice and storytelling is evident in both her photography and community leadership.

## How Cleveland Youth Feel About Gun Violence

From page 7

have been four incidents at CHHS so far this school year, involving students and guns, including an attempted robbery by an armed 17-year-old student.

There is a concern with the impact of social media and guns on young men in Cleveland. Young people, in particular, young men view these incidents as humorous and looking cool."

She believes that less accessibility to guns could create a safer environment for Cleveland. She is not alone.

Dr. Jack Sullivan Jr. became executive director of the Ohio Council of Churches in 2019. The council, founded 405 years ago, advocates for unity, justice, and peace.

"It's about working for human rights—ensuring people can live out their God-given potential without discrimination, violence, or oppression," Sullivan said.

Sullivan, who grew up in an African American family, was raised

on East 149th Street off Kinsman in 1959. "We were hopeful for the future together, even though it was obvious we were living under segregated conditions at that time," he said.

When he was 12 years old, Sullivan Jr.'s mother was shot by her estranged husband. Fortunately, she survived. Years later, his youngest sister was shot to death in Cleveland. These two events have influenced the way he views public policy. He would like to see stricter background checks and a total ban on the sale of assault weapons and high-capacity weapons that would only be used to kill a large number of people at a fast rate.

After officiating a funeral for a 17-year-old boy in Cleveland shot to death a year after being baptized by Sullivan, he is concerned about the safety of young people between the ages of 18 and 30 years old.

"I get those calls on a weekly basis about people dying in my city. I pray that we find a way to

change how we think about guns and gun violence in our country," Cleveland Mayor Justin M. Bibb said when he attended the 2023 Global Black Economic Forum at Essence Festival.

Sarah Murdock, born in New York and raised in Cleveland, is a local journalist, multi-disciplinary artist, and the young author of *Bully Free Zone: "How to Stand Up for Yourself."*

**WRITERS  
PODCASTERS  
VIDEOGRAPHERS  
BLOGGERS**  
**GET PAID\$\$\$**  
Email us at:  
[Info@theclevelandobserver.com](mailto:Info@theclevelandobserver.com)  
Phone:  
**(216) 236-8081**

