

# State officials renew attempt to extend JobsOhio's lucrative lease on state liquor profits

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COLUMBUS, Ohio—After a false start last year, a state board is slated to vote Monday on extending JobsOhio's lease of state liquor profits for an additional 15 years.

JobsOhio, via an affiliated nonprofit, received roughly \$255 million in liquor profits in fiscal year 2024, according to data provided by a JobsOhio spokesman. JobsOhio uses that money to help attract and subsidize economic-development projects around the state, including [a \\$20 billion Intel computer-chip factory](#) and [a planned \\$900 million weapons manufacturing plant](#), both located near Columbus.

The liquor profits lease currently runs through 2038. But in 2023, Ohio lawmakers inserted language in the state's budget bill allowing the Ohio Controlling Board -- a seven-member panel mostly made up of state lawmakers that makes state spending adjustments -- to approve a 15-year extension of that lease.

Under [a proposal included on Monday's Controlling Board agenda](#), JobsOhio's lease would be extended through 2053 under the same conditions of the current lease. That includes making deferred payments to the state when liquor profits grow more than 3% per year.

After JobsOhio was created by then-Gov. John Kasich in 2013, [it paid \\$1.4 billion up front](#) to obtain the initial lease, raising the money through bonds paid off by future liquor profits. JobsOhio wouldn't pay a similar type of lump sum to get the lease extension, according to JobsOhio communications director Ryan Squire.

DeWine's administration initially sought to obtain a 15-year lease extension from the Controlling Board last August, but [that effort was shelved](#) after board members from both parties said they first wanted to question JobsOhio officials about a range of concerns.

In particular, then-House Finance Committee Chair Jay Edwards, an Athens County Republican, said at the time he felt JobsOhio wasn't doing enough to promote development in Appalachian Ohio and that it frequently tries to take credit for projects by jumping "in at the last minute and (giving) a little bit of money after it's already kind of done deal."

Edwards and Democrats on the Controlling Board also wanted to put in place new transparency requirements for JobsOhio, which has controversially been exempted from state open-records law.

However, Edwards was prevented from seeking reelection because of term limits. His replacement -- both on Controlling Board and as House Finance Committee chair -- is Republican state Rep. Brian Stewart of Pickaway County, who favors extending the JobsOhio lease.

"I think there is a long track record of success (with JobsOhio)," Stewart said in an interview Friday morning. "I think you're seeing those big wins coming to Ohio, and I think there's an appetite to solidify that and send the right signals -- not just inside Ohio, but outside Ohio -- about jobs, Ohio's role moving forward, and helping to make sure we keep attracting and growing jobs here in Ohio."

Stewart said he doesn't have the same questions and concerns that Edwards had.

"I think their record of success overall, speaks for itself," Stewart said. "And I think that outweighs an individual member, you know, wishing that X project or Y project had come to their district."

State Rep. Tristan Rader of Lakewood, who will be filling in during Monday's Controlling Board meeting as one of two Democrats on the panel, expressed skepticism about diverting state liquor profits to JobsOhio for an additional 15 years without any additional accountability or transparency reforms.

"I'm gonna have to hear a lot more than I've seen so far from jobs Ohio in order to understand this, to be comfortable with voting yes on such a giant contract," Rader said.

"I'm not saying they're not doing the work or not doing good things for Ohio," he continued. "I know they play a big role in attracting business to our state. But I just want to see more transparency. I want to see more accountability."

Monday's Controlling Board request to extend the lease was submitted by the state's budget office. In their request, state budget director Kim Murnieks stated that the

lease extension “is crucial for Ohio’s continued economic growth and industrial diversity, for support to communities across Ohio, and for employment growth and continued fiscal stability for businesses and families throughout the state.”

JobsOhio spokesman Matt Englehart expressed similar sentiments in a statement.

Ohio, Englehart stated, “is in a pivotal moment” right now economically, given the need to build up the state’s manufacturing to support the megaprojects that have already come here, as well as to ensure the automotive industry invests in Ohio as it transitions to new technologies like electric vehicles.

“An extension would bring certainty and flexibility for long-term economic development projects, providing a competitive advantage for the people of Ohio,” he said. We’re grateful that our elected leaders recognized that value in 2023, and we look forward to seizing that momentum in the years to come.”