

Unclaimed fund requests spike after Ohio lawmakers pitch Cleveland Browns' stadium plan

Visitors to Ohio's unclaimed funds website more than tripled between June 2 and June 3 after plan was announced to use money for new Browns stadium.

By Jessie Balmert
Akron Beacon Journal

When state lawmakers [pitched paying for a new Cleveland Browns stadium with Ohioans' unclaimed funds](#), they inadvertently launched a public service awareness campaign for the program.

Ohio runs an [unclaimed funds website](#) where residents can check for lost or forgotten money, such as utility deposits, inactive checking and savings accounts and last paychecks. About [\\$4.8 billion is sitting in the coffers](#).

Of that sum, Republicans in the Ohio Senate want to spend \$1.7 billion, which has sat idle for at least 10 years, on sports and cultural projects. That includes \$600 million earmarked for a domed stadium for the [Cleveland Browns](#) in Brook Park. But it could also pay for requested [renovations to the Cincinnati Bengals' Paycor Stadium](#).

That plan, announced June 3 [along with other budget changes](#), led to a spike in claims and activity on the unclaimed funds website. Ohioans filed 8,057 claims on June 3 and 15,777 on June 4, compared to 1,448 on June 2 before the announcement, according to the Ohio Department of Commerce.

Visitors to the unclaimed funds website more than tripled between June 2 and June 3. The increase was similar to when the Ohio Department of Commerce runs digital advertising or sends out a news release about unclaimed funds, spokesman Franklin Freytag said.

The Senate's plan prompted a slew of articles about the unclaimed funds website and how to access them. One state senator [shared the website](#) with a goal of "reuniting Ohioans with their money."

Will unclaimed funds be used to pay for sports stadiums? That should be hashed out between now and the end of June. House Republicans want to pay for the [new stadium with \\$600 million in bonds](#), and Gov. Mike DeWine pitched increasing taxes on sports betting.