

# METRO

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## Ohio turns down U.S. offer of \$176.3 million for jobless

### Officials feared long-term costs

STEPHEN KOFF  
Plain Dealer Bureau Chief

WASHINGTON — The state of Ohio says you don't get anything for free — not even free money, \$176.3 million worth from the federal government to expand benefits for jobless Ohioans. Saying it fears long-term entangle-

ments, Ohio let the deadline pass Monday without applying for the money, which could have gone toward offering unemployment benefits while residents were in approved job training programs, or while they sought only part-time work.

Or Ohio could have used the money to give more aid than it offers now to unemployed residents with children. As a fourth option, it could have expanded benefits to people who leave their jobs due to domestic violence, a spouse's job transfer or illness of an

immediate relative.

The two uses for the money, which would come from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, providing \$7 billion for expanded unemployment benefits. But the state legislature, with clear signals from Gov. John Kasich's administration, let the application deadline expire Monday without action.

This put Ohio at odds with 33 other states, including Utah, Georgia and South Carolina.

"It would create new costs," said Ben Johnson, spokesman for the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services. "It would be expanding benefits based on a one-time infusion of money."

Ohio is already \$2.6 billion in debt for money it borrowed just to run its regular unemployment program, Johnson said. He said the state did not wish to add new costs with programs it cannot afford once the federal money runs out.

SEE JOBLESS | B3

## Commentary

PHILLIP MORRIS



### Flash mob scene stirs preoccupation

With amazing ease, up- and-coming rap artist Machine Gun Kelly drew a hastily arranged flash mob and flooded the food court of the Strongsville Mall on Saturday afternoon with his young fans.

The event made national news.

Why?

Primarily because flash mobs have dominated international news in recent days thanks to riotous hooligans in the United Kingdom, as well as flash mobs a bit closer to home.

The story was also judged newsworthy because the 2008 graduate of Shaker Heights High School, formally known as Colson Baker, was arrested shortly after he arrived at the mall, where several hundred of his Twitter-based fans had already gathered.

The loosely organized plan was for the assembled to break into a concert frenzy, or "rage" when Baker began to rap his signature ode to Cleveland, a fascinating little ditty with a recurring hook that simply declares, "(expletive) I'm from Cleveland."

But mall security didn't want Baker using their dining room tables as a stage, so they arrested him when he refused to dismount. He and several friends, also arrested, are scheduled to appear on Thursday in Strongsville Mayor's Court, where they will answer to charges of disorderly conduct.

To some observers, there is a bit more here than meets the eye. Popular interest in this young man, who spent four years in Egypt as part of his childhood, has probably never been greater.

He choreographed a mall flash mob, no one was hurt, no public vandalism occurred, no stores were looted, and he is now trending well on Internet search engines.

You can't buy that type of publicity.

But that's not really the story. The story is really about the unprecedented ease and dispatch with which one charismatic man or woman can now influence malls, cities or nations.

It's yet another reminder of the awesome social "people" power that can be unleashed when an individual has the ability to instantly mobilize others en masse through something as simple as a tweet.

If for simple giggles and grins, a young Colson Baker wakes up one morning and decides to "take over" a popular mall by assembling his lemmings, what's to stop someone with a truly powerful vision from seeking to change the world (for better or worse) with a Twitter account?

SEE MORRIS | B2

## Black church's closing put 'Roamin' Catholics' out



GUSCHAN | THE PLAIN DEALER

Bob Kloos, right, of the Community of St. Peter church, greets Phillis and Phillip Clips on Sunday. The Clips and others from the closed St. Adalbert Catholic Church go from congregation to congregation looking for a new spiritual home. They call themselves the "Roamin' Catholics."

## Displaced parishioners look for home

MICHAEL O'MALLEY  
Plain Dealer Reporter

They call themselves "Roamin' Catholics," traveling from church to church each Sunday, looking for a new place to worship since Cleveland's oldest black Catholic church was shut down more than a year ago.

Initially, there were nearly 50 of them from St. Adalbert Catholic Church on East 83rd Street after it closed June 6, 2010, as part of a diocese-wide downsizing.

But some found other worship

communities — both Catholic and Protestant — while others just quit church, cold turkey.

Roamer Phillis Fuller Clips, 54, said she knows of 14 former Adalbert members or families who joined Protestant churches, 29 who no longer attend any church and 69 who joined other parishes.

But 16, including Clips and her husband, are still displaced and say they will continue to roam as a group until they get a ruling from the Vatican on an appeal they filed, challenging Bishop Richard Lennon's closing of St. Adalbert's.

More than a dozen Cleveland-area parishes closed by Lennon over the last two years have appeals pending in Rome.

"We're praying for a miracle on 83rd Street," said Clips, who hopes to return someday to the shuttered St. Adalbert's.

Meanwhile, the Roamin' Catholics have not missed a Sunday Mass since their church closed.

"We are the church, and we still have our faith," said roamer Joyce Sanders. Her family had been part of St. Adalbert's black Catholic roots for five generations.

"Our faith is carrying us on," Sanders said.

The Roamin' Catholics have a pool of about two dozen parishes they regularly visit on both sides of town, partaking in Sunday rituals and gauging how warmly they are received.

Diocese spokesman Robert Tayek said the diocese was concerned that the roamers are not registered with particular parishes because in the event of a death, there could be complications over where the funeral would be held.

SEE ROAMERS | B2

## FitzGerald: Vote-by-mail program might survive, despite state ban

JOHN CANIGLIA  
Plain Dealer Reporter

Cuyahoga County Executive Ed FitzGerald said Monday that he would like to continue a successful vote-by-mail program — even after the state's top elections official ordered boards of elections to stop the mailings.

FitzGerald said he is reviewing whether the county can pay for a mass mailing of absentee voter applications that, until now, had been handled by the county's board of elections. His comments came just as Ohio Secretary of State Jon Husted sent a directive that prohibited the boards from sending the

applications to all registered voters in a county — a practice in Cuyahoga County since 2006.

A controversial state law goes into effect in about six weeks that also prevents county boards of elections from paying return postage on the applications and paying postage for the completed ballots. What FitzGerald and other proponents of the vote-by-mail plan are hoping for is that another agency can handle the mailings.

After learning of Husted's directive about 4:35 p.m., FitzGerald said: "We'll review it and make sure there's no prohibition of other units of government doing a mailing."

SEE ABSENTEE | B6

## New county corrections officer has history of domestic problems

HENRY J. GOMEZ  
Plain Dealer Reporter

A recently hired Cuyahoga County corrections officer has a controversial and well-publicized past that a Sheriff's Department spokesman said officials were unaware of when they offered her the \$25,000-a-year position.

Rachel Volkar held a loaded gun to her head and threatened to kill herself after a domestic dispute five years ago, according to findings from a prosecutor who investigated the case.

But Volkar kept her job as a police officer in the tiny Stark County village of Waynesburg because she was married to the chief, the report

stated. Her husband obtained a medical release so she could reclaim her gun and return to work without receiving treatment for depression.

The incident should serve as a caution sign to her new employer, said Frank Forchione, the former Canton city prosecutor whom Waynesburg officials tapped to look into the matter.

"Based on my review, I would be careful," said Forchione, who today serves as a Stark County Common Pleas Court judge. "There was a history of violence with her husband, a history of depression and history of inappropriate conduct. She's not applying at a Taco Bell."

SEE COUNTY | B3

THE PLAIN DEALER  
**PolitiFact** Ohio

## EPA grant helps brownfield program

Promise: Make vacant land, greenspace and brownfields productive

Cuyahoga County Executive Ed FitzGerald



ROBERT HIGGS  
PolitiFact Ohio editor

As a candidate, Cuyahoga County Executive Ed FitzGerald touted strategic land use policy as a key component of economic development.

Among his promises was a pledge to make vacant land, green space and brownfields productive.

With brownfields, that can be tricky.

That's because use of the property can be complicated by the presence of hazardous substances, pollutants, or contaminants and cleaning up the property is expensive.

In June, the county won a \$500,000 grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for brownfield redevelopment. The grant will provide money for Cuyahoga County's Brownfield Redevelopment Fund, a revolving loan fund established to help clean up sites contaminated with hazardous substances.

The county awards grants and makes low interest loans from the fund to encourage redevelopment, reduce neighborhood blight, enhance green space and create jobs.

Since 2004, it has invested more than \$3.8 million in 12 projects, leveraging over \$25 million in additional project investment, according to the county.

Based on obtaining the EPA grant, we set the Fitz-O-Meter for this promise to In the Works.

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SOURCES: Office of Cuyahoga County Executive Ed FitzGerald, "County awarded \$500,000 for brownfield redevelopment," June 23, 2011; Ed FitzGerald, "Pursue the Sustainable Economy" campaign policy statement; U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Brownfields and Land Revitalization