



Morning News and Stuff

Panel debates charter schools; Kasich sets up presidential fundraising org; this train could get us to Chicago in 48 minutes

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Nick Swartsell

Hey all. News time.

Last night the League of Women Voters held a panel discussion in Clifton about Ohio's charter schools, especially those in Cincinnati. The panel, titled "[Charter Schools: Are They Accountable?](#)," featured Cincinnati Public Schools Superintendent Mary Ronan, Aaron Churchill of charter school sponsoring organization the Thomas Fordham Institute, Steve Dyer of progressive think tank Innovation Ohio and Republican state Sen. Bill Seitz.

The answer to the titular question posed to the panel: No, charters aren't being held accountable in Ohio, and that's bad. Ronan said CPS loses about 8,000 students a year to charter schools in the city and that many of those schools aren't prepared to educate them (see: the late VLT Academy, any number of other charters in the city). But some panelists argued that the oversight problems, which state lawmakers are working to fix with bills in the House and Senate, isn't a reason to throw the baby out with the bathwater. They point to other charters that have succeeded and say that with reform and increased oversight, the privately run but publicly-funded schools will deliver on their promise. But there are probably going to have to be big changes: Charters in Ohio, most agree, [are a big mess](#).

- At the same time a reasoned debate occurred on charter schools and the serious questions around educating Cincinnati's next generation, elsewhere a highly paid grown man dropped numerous F-bombs about a game, reporters spilled much [digital ink](#) on the meaningless spectacle and we all clicked and clicked, spurring on the inane prattling of both. Well done, all of us.

- More changes to the Lytle Park area downtown are in the works, according to this [Enquirer article](#). A few days ago, I linked you to a story in the *Business Courier* about the luxury hotel concept that will be moving into the Anna Louise Inn site, which has been occupied by a 104-year-old women's shelter that is moving to Mount Auburn in June after [a protracted legal battle](#). There's way more happening in the neighborhood, including a \$5 million-plus remake of Lytle Park, a \$32 million ODOT rehab of the tunnel that carries I-71 underneath the park and other housing and commercial space in the area. Much of the change is being driven by Western & Southern, the insurance giant headquartered in the neighborhood, and its real estate arm Eagle Realty. I smell a new reality show called *Extreme Corporate Makeover* in the works here.

- Ohio Gov. John Kasich's campaign **registered a non-profit** called A New Day for America with the IRS Monday, officially setting up a fundraising structure for the Republican's nascent presidential bid. The group has some heavy hitters on its board, including former advertising executive and big-time GOP donor Philip Geier. A U.S. Senator from New Hampshire, a former state lawmaker and some Columbus businessmen round out the board of the group. It's all a big sign that Kasich is more or less set on running for the Republican nomination, though he has yet to formally announce that intention. So far, Sens. Ted Cruz of Texas, Rand Paul of Kentucky and Marco Rubio of Florida have all officially announced their campaigns. Others, including frontrunners former Florida Governor Jeb Bush and Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker, are expected to announce their bids as well.

Right now, Kasich lags behind all of them, but a big primary win in one of the early states like New Hampshire could boost his profile. He'll have to somehow convince GOP primary delegates that he's moderate enough to win a general election but also conservative enough to uphold strong conservative values. He has competition on that front: Both Bush and Rubio exhibit some combination of staunch conservative policy positions and more moderate and practical beliefs, and both are already national players. But both also have vulnerabilities: Rubio is on the outs with much of the party after he attempted to launch an effort at comprehensive immigration reform. That's sunk him with the party's far-right faction. Bush, meanwhile, struggles with the general bad aftertaste the public remembers from Dubya's presidency. Kasich's chances may come down to the GOP's estimation of how toxic the Bush name still is. We'll see.

- I'm going to be brief with this because it's maddening, but newsworthy: There **could be an end in sight** to the big fight going on in Washington over Loretta Lynch. No, not Appalachian songstress **Loretta Lynn**. I'm talking about the woman President Barack Obama has nominated to replace outgoing U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder. Lynch would be the first female African American A.G., and her nomination has been pending for five months as the Senate battles over voting on her. Meanwhile, Senate Majority Leader Republican Mitch McConnell of Kentucky has signaled he won't put Lynch's nomination vote through until another matter is settled: a Senate vote on a bill that would fight human trafficking. Sounds simple and like something everyone can get behind, right? Except that Republicans have tacked on an anti-abortion provision in that bill, and Democrats are refusing to pass it as it stands. But, according to **this story**, negotiations are underway to push the Lynch nomination to a vote after several high-profile Republicans have publicly criticized the hold up on her nomination. Phew. Everything is a mess. Everything sucks.

- Finally, let's read this really quickly and dream: Japan's maglev bullet train just set **a new speed record of 375 miles an hour**. At that speed, it would take you about 48 minutes to get to Chicago from Cincinnati. So if the United States was more forward-thinking in its transit policy, you could hop on the train after work, grab some deep-dish pizza and a can of Old Style (or if you like the taste of burning tires, **a bottle of Malort**), and be back before bedtime. (This is a slight exaggeration, of course, and it would be insanely complicated and expensive if not impossible to build such a train here, but still. We can dream, right?)

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