

NOTE: *This is possible because the bureau's investments paid off better than expected, growing its net assets \$8.3 billion — much more than needed to cover future liabilities. Gov. John Kasich's answer was to return the excess to the job creators to whom it rightly belongs. He called it "one of the most significant economic-stimulus efforts you will see."*



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A welcome windfall

Cities, schools, private employers will benefit from state's give-back

It's not hard to imagine the good that a \$12.8 million windfall would do if put to use serving Franklin County's children and residents.

According to estimates released last week by the state, Franklin County would be one of the biggest public-sector winners in the state under a proposed \$1 billion give-back of excess workers' compensation funds this summer.

The \$12.8 million in estimated rebates for its schools and local governments are second only to Cuyahoga County's \$15.2 million calculated rebate. In all, Ohio's public employers likely would reap \$113 million.

The board of the Bureau of Workers' Compensation still has to approve the deal at its May 30 meeting, but the reaction to the plan has been excitement and relief.

Districts and communities, having endured painful cuts in the past few years as the state balanced its budget and the recession strained local revenues, no doubt will have a longer list of places to spend the rebates than the rebate dollars will stretch to cover.

With this comes a note of caution: This anticipated one-time bounty is just that. It shouldn't be used to grow budgets by adding unsustainable expenses. To employees tempted to seize upon this pot of money as "theirs" for raises, these dollars should offer only an opportunity to restore services or for capital needs — worn equipment, supplies or building repairs — cut as part of austerity measures.

The rebate checks are not a continuing source of income.

But even the smallest amounts will be a boon to communities and agencies that stretch every dollar. The rebate for the Bexley Public Library, for instance, is calculated at \$2,520. The tiny village of Riverlea would get the smallest check in Franklin County, just \$220 — about \$1 per house.

Meanwhile, the city of Columbus could expect \$5.4 million, Franklin County government would get \$1.2 million, Columbus City Schools would get about \$1.9 million (comparatively, Whitehall City Schools would reap about \$85,000) and the Columbus Metropolitan Library would get \$97,690.

In total, Ohio's cities would collectively get about \$37 million, counties would see \$16.5 million in total rebates and schools would get about \$42.5 million.

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The \$1 billion in rebates are part of a \$1.9 billion proposal that will provide an economic boost to Ohio's 210,000 public and private employers in the fund. The bureau plans to triple safety grants for employers and modernize its payment system, a move that would allow it to lower premiums by 2 percent for private employers and 4 percent for public ones.

Read full editorial here: <http://www.dispatch.com/content/stories/editorials/2013/05/23/a-welcome-windfall.html>