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Week in Review

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As a service to the clients and friends of Governmental Policy Group, Inc. and RH Resources we would like to extend the following weekly update of events happening around Capitol Square.

ADDICTION/SUBSTANCE ABUSE

A new study out of the University of Toledo (UT) estimates that fatal overdoses related to opioids cost the metropolitan Toledo economy \$1.6 billion and more than 2,000 jobs in 2017. According to study authors, at \$1.6 billion, the total economic toll of the opioid epidemic is equivalent to approximately 4.5 percent of the region's gross domestic product -- or roughly the same amount of economic activity generated annually by the entire private construction industry.

BALLOT ISSUES

State and federal courts will now weigh whether the Ohio Constitution guarantees referendum organizers the full 90 days between a bill's signing and effective date to collect signatures for a ballot issue to overturn state law -- Ohioans Against Corporate Bailouts' (OACB) argument against HB6 (Callender-Wilkin) energy subsidies. The Ohio Supreme Court has agreed to hold oral argument on five certified questions advanced by Secretary of State Frank LaRose and referred by U.S. District

Court Judge Edmund Sargus, who did not rule on the substance of OACB's position last October but said the argument is a question of state law to be answered in state court.

FY21-22 CAPITAL APPROPRIATIONS

County governments have tallied almost \$1.4 billion in construction and upgrade costs for outdated jails and are hoping the DeWine administration will pledge \$200 million in the upcoming capital budget toward an eventual \$1 billion over 10 years for jail facilities. Jail facilities lack capacity for current demand and need improvements because of their "inappropriate role of de facto mental health and addiction facilities" and the growing female population in jails, according to materials submitted to the administration jointly by the County Commissioners Association of Ohio (CCAO) and Buckeye State Sheriffs' Association (BSSA).

EDUCATION

Completion-based or competency-based funding models for e-schools aren't feasible at this time, the Ohio Department of Education (ODE) concluded in a report to state leaders on the subject. The report also shows how Ohio's current model gives e-schools funding for about two-thirds of the students they enroll on average. The e-school funding report, which lawmakers required ODE to complete by the end of 2019, also found other states generally use online schooling as a part-time supplement to traditional education, with concurrent enrollment at e-schools and brick-and-mortar schools. That's in contrast to the dominant model of full-time e-school enrollment in Ohio's online education sector.

High school coaches would no longer be allowed to require their athletes to participate in one sport under legislation proposed by Reps. Adam Miller (D-Columbus) and Joe Miller (D-Amherst). As certain high school sports such as football and basketball have continued to grow and become more popular, with a number of events being shown on TV, some coaches have required their athletes to specialize in one particular sport.

ELECTIONS 2020

The following endorsements were made over the week:

- The Ohio Senate campaign of Bill Reineke announced the endorsements of Attorney General Dave Yost, Auditor of State Keith Faber, and Treasurer Robert Sprague.

EMPLOYMENT/UNEMPLOYMENT

According to new data released by the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) Friday, Dec. 20, Ohio's unemployment rate was 4.2 percent in November 2019, unchanged from October, as the state added 6,700 jobs over the month. Ohio's nonagricultural wage and salary employment increased 6,700 over the month, from a revised 5,591,300 in October to 5,598,000 in November 2019. The number of workers unemployed in Ohio in November was 247,000, up 1,000 from 246,000 in October, ODJFS said. The number of unemployed has decreased by 20,000 in the past 12 months from 267,000.

FEDERAL

In a series of press releases, U.S. Sens. Sherrod Brown (D-OH) and Rob Portman (R-OH) applauded Ohio provisions in the FFY20 Funding Bill passed Thursday, Dec. 19 by the U.S. Senate and expected to be signed into law by President Donald Trump. This legislation comes after the Senate's passage of the FFY20 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) conference report, earlier in the week.

Following the U.S. House's vote to ratify the amended U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA), Ohio elected officials from both sides of the aisle declared victory. The vote was 385-41, with most of the opposition coming from Democrats.

U.S. Sen. Sherrod Brown (D-OH) Thursday announced that Trudy Perkins will serve as his communications director in his Washington, D.C. office, beginning this week. Perkins most recently served as deputy chief of staff and communications director for the late U.S. Rep. Elijah E. Cummings (D-MD). She has served as a congressional staffer since 2002.

GAMING/GAMBLING

Nearly 40 legislators from 19 states are expected to attend the upcoming winter meeting of the National Council of Legislators from Gaming States (NCLGS), the organization has announced. The conference is scheduled to take place Friday-Sunday, Jan. 10-12 in San Diego, CA.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY/STATEHOUSE

According to an announcement in Thursday's Senate Journal, Senate President Larry Obhof (R-Medina) has appointed Sen. Theresa Gavarone (R-Bowling Green) as the chair of the Joint Committee on Agency Rule Review (JCARR). She succeeds Rep. Jamie Callender (R-Concord), who held the position in the first year of the 133rd General Assembly.

Rep. Cindy Abrams (R-Harrison) came to the Ohio House in October, replacing former Rep. Louis Blessing (R-Cincinnati), after having been an officer in the Cincinnati Police Department and a member of the Harrison City Council. She said that the Legislature was always on her radar, noting that "public service is what I know."

GOVERNOR

Appointments made during the week include the following:

- Gregory A. Guzman of Maumee (Lucas County), Daniel A. Molina of Loveland (Clermont County) and Elizabeth Guzman Bowman of Pickerington (Fairfield County) reappointed to the Commission on Hispanic-Latino Affairs for terms beginning Oct. 8, 2019 and ending Oct. 7, 2022.
- Michael J. Snee of Dublin (Delaware County) as the state of Ohio representative to the Midwest Interstate Low-level Radioactive Waste Commission for a term beginning Dec. 20, 2019 and continuing at the pleasure of the governor.
- Lisa N. Hickman of Westerville (Franklin County) to the Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities Council for a term beginning Dec. 20, 2019 and ending June 1, 2021.

- Thomas W. Gunlock of Centerville (Montgomery County) to the Wright State University Board of Trustees for a term beginning Dec. 20, 2019 and ending June 30, 2026.

- Joanne Phillips Estes of Cincinnati (Hamilton County) and Anissa D. Siefert of New Washington (Crawford County) reappointed to the Ohio Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy, and Athletic Trainers Board for terms beginning Aug. 28, 2019 and ending Oct. 27, 2022.

- Clara M. Osterhage of Dayton (Montgomery County) reappointed to the State Cosmetology and Barber Board for a term beginning Nov. 1, 2019 and ending Oct. 31, 2024.

- Phillip R. Buell of Kalida (Putnam County) reappointed to the Credit Union Council for a term beginning Sept. 23, 2019 and ending Sept. 22, 2022.

- Robb A. White of Dayton (Montgomery County) to the Credit Union Council for a term beginning Jan. 1, 2020 and ending Sept. 22, 2022.

- Matthew W. Warnock of Chagrin Falls (Geauga County) reappointed to the Oil and Gas Leasing Commission for a term beginning Sept. 30, 2019 and ending Sept. 29, 2024.

- Joel L. King, Jr. of Gahanna (Franklin County) reappointed to the Ohio Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday Commission for a term beginning Dec. 31, 2019 and ending Dec. 30, 2022.

- Susan M. Rogers of Jackson (Jackson County) and Adetokunbo A. Adelekan of Centerville (Montgomery County) reappointed to the Ohio Commission on Service and Volunteerism for terms beginning April 22, 2019 and ending April 21, 2022.

- Morna O. Smith of Gahanna (Franklin County) to the Ohio Commission on Service and Volunteerism for a term beginning Jan. 1, 2020 and ending April 21, 2022.

- Nita Gupta of Wadsworth (Medina County), Jonathan S. Hughes of Dublin (Franklin County) and Mark L. Rickel of Columbus (Franklin County) to the State Lottery Commission for terms beginning Dec. 20, 2019 and ending Aug. 1, 2022.

- Jamie L. Gaffney of Liberty Township (Butler County) to the Advisory Board on Amusement Ride Safety for a term beginning Jan. 1, 2020 and ending Jan. 1, 2025.

GREAT LAKES

Brian Alford has been named assistant director for Stone Laboratory, Ohio Sea Grant Director Chris Winslow announced Friday. Alford will oversee all aspects of the lab's operations, from its scientific research program to education and public outreach efforts, according to Ohio State University (OSU), which runs the Gibraltar Island campus on Lake Erie.

HUMAN SERVICES

The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) will offer grants totaling \$7 million meant to grow the number of publicly funded child care providers and improve the quality of existing providers, the agency announced Friday, Dec. 20. Nonprofit and public entities are eligible

for the funds, and \$3 million in incentives will also be offered to current publicly funded child care providers to help them become rated or improve their Step Up To Quality (SUTQ) rating.

Ohio child care professionals are taking advantage of the Powering Optimal Wages and Encouraging Retention (POWER) Ohio, which provides them scholarships and helps them earn advanced credentials while they work, according to the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS).

IMMIGRATION

Gov. Mike DeWine recently approved the resettlement of refugees in the state of Ohio, responding to a deadline set by an executive order signed by President Donald Trump requiring states to consent to receiving refugees. Trump signed the executive order in September, saying refugees will be resettled in jurisdictions where both state and local governments consent to receive them. The executive order required states to give their consent in writing, which must now be done by Tuesday, Jan. 21. Trump also reduced the number of refugees that will be allowed into the U.S. to 18,000, down from 30,000 in the previous fiscal year.

JUDICIAL

Effective Jan. 1, all Ohio courts that use mediation must now adopt the state's Uniform Mediation Act by local rule, identify eligible cases, and "address confidentiality," though new rules do not define that further. The Ohio Supreme Court said that 77% of common pleas courts and 63 percent of all state courts refer cases to mediation. Of those using mediation, 84% do so by local rule.

NATURAL RESOURCES

The Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) Division of Forestry is looking for suggestions to include in its 10-year update of Ohio's Forest Action Plan, which includes a statewide assessment of Ohio's valuable forest resources.

ODNR is redoubling efforts to plug "orphan" oil and gas wells with another \$25 million for private bid contracts in 2020. Its Division of Oil and Gas Resources (DOGR) says the department also needs more certified contractors to complete the work. Operators wishing to be certified must be approved by the Ohio Department of Administrative Services as of Jan. 20. Once certified, contractors may join bids administered by ODNR. The Request for Proposal (SCP905520) can be viewed at <https://tinyurl.com/tl5cjq8>

NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS

The top 10 most-donated-to U.S. charities for 2018 all saw at least \$1 billion in private contributions, according to a recent report by *Forbes* using data from Giving USA. In total, U.S. charities received \$427 billion in contributions last year. The United Way Worldwide was in first place, with \$3.3 billion in private donations and \$3.7 billion in total revenue and had a 90 percent fundraising efficiency score and 85 percent charitable commitment. Other rankings in terms of private donations included second place Feeding America, \$2.8 billion; the Task Force for Global Health, \$2.6 billion; Salvation Army, \$2 billion; St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, \$1.7 billion; American National Red Cross, \$1.5 billion; Direct Relief, \$1.4 billion; Habitat for Humanity International, \$1.4 billion; YMCA of the U.S.A., \$1.1 billion; and Americares Foundation, \$1 billion.

POLLS/STUDIES

A new poll out of Pew Research Center shows Americans have a mixed assessment of the economy and their views differ significantly by income and political party. Majorities of upper-income (71 percent) and middle-income (60 percent) Americans say current economic conditions are excellent or good. But only about four in 10 lower-income adults share that view, while a majority (57 percent) say the economy is only fair or poor.

PUBLIC SAFETY

More people died on Ohio's roadways over the Christmas holiday, but fewer died over New Year's, according to the Ohio State Highway Patrol. According to the patrol, 12 people were killed in eight fatal crashes for the period running from midnight on Tuesday, Dec. 24 through 11:59 p.m. on Wednesday, Dec. 25. That number was higher than in 2018, when 11 people were killed during a period running from Dec. 21-25. The patrol said there were four deaths over a two-day reporting period that began at midnight on Tuesday, Dec. 31, 2019 through 11:59 p.m. on Jan. 1, 2020. The patrol said the number was lower than over a four-day reporting period last year, when 12 fatalities were reported.

The Ohio Bureau of Motor Vehicles (BMV) announced that it will be among the first in the nation to launch a vehicle safety recall notification program using the state's vehicle registration renewal process. According to the BMV, vehicle safety recall information will be printed on registration renewal notices, which are sent through the mail. Ohio drivers will begin receiving open recall notifications beginning this month.

STATE GOVERNMENT

Ohio's minimum wage got a 15-cent bump to \$8.70 benefitting an estimated 84,000 of Ohio's lowest paid workers effective Wednesday, Jan. 1, while Social Security and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits for nearly 69 million Americans increased 1.6 percent. The 1.6 percent cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) begin with benefits payable to more than 63 million Social Security beneficiaries in January 2020. Increased payments to more than 8 million SSI beneficiaries began on Dec. 31, 2019. (Note: Some people receive both Social Security and SSI benefits.)

Over the holiday season, the Ohio Ethics Commission issued a reminder to public officials and employees of the gift-acceptance restrictions under Ohio's ethics laws. The commission said Ohio Ethics Law prohibits a public official or public employee from soliciting or accepting anything of value that could have a substantial and improper influence on the performance of public duties. "Nominal or very inexpensive gifts such as a coffee mug, tin of popcorn, or t-shirt are not considered substantial," the commission said. "These types of minor gifts are not prohibited under the ethics law, though you may still choose to decline them to avoid even the appearance of impropriety."

As the new head of Ohio's construction oversight agency, Cheryl Lyman has her eye on how data analytics can help with its mission, and she faces the challenge of increased demand for help from local schools amid strong competition for the talents of the construction workforce. Lyman said she jumped at the chance to lead the Ohio Facilities Construction Commission because of the potential to make a difference on a statewide level and the ability to assess the progress of two reforms she'd worked on years ago -- construction procurement reform and the establishment of the agency itself,

which first complemented and later subsumed her previous employer, the Ohio School Facilities Commission.

TRANSPORTATION/INFRASTRUCTURE

Gov. Mike DeWine observed that 2019 had become the fourth deadliest year on Ohio's highways in the last decade. Blaming much of the increase on distracted driving, DeWine said he will push the Ohio Legislature to make distracted driving a primary offense. Speaking at a press conference prior to the holidays, he urged Ohio drivers to exercise caution and to not drive drunk or distracted. DeWine added that although the technology in vehicles has steadily made them safer, traffic fatalities continue to rise, and said it can only be attributed to driver error. According to the governor's office, there have been 91,135 crashes involving distracted driving since 2013, including 47,273 injuries and 305 deaths.

WORKERS' COMPENSATION

Ohio Bureau of Workers' Compensation (BWC) Administrator/CEO Stephanie McCloud discussed the year's successes and goals for 2020 during the BWC board's final meeting of 2019 on Friday, Dec. 20. Accomplishments she listed included lowering rates for all employers, sending \$1.5 billion in dividend checks to Ohio employers, increasing safety grant funding, expanding substance abuse and recovery programs in workplaces, removing Oxycodone from the formulary and offering drug disposal systems in pharmacies.

LEGISLATIVE ACTIVITY:

SENATE:

No legislative activity

HOUSE:

No legislative activity