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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.

**AGING**

The Ohio Department of Aging (ODA) said Thursday it is distributing \$8.8 million across the state to the state's 12 area agencies on aging (AAAs) to help meet the growing demand for meal assistance by older Ohioans affected by the coronavirus (COVID-19) public health emergency.

**ARTS, SPORTS AND ENTERTAINMENT**

Ohio Citizens for the Arts (OCA), in collaboration with Arts Cleveland, recently released preliminary findings from two online surveys showing the effects of the coronavirus pandemic on the arts and creative sector. OCA said that initial results reveal harsh economic implications for the livelihoods of individual artists and the operations of arts organizations that serve the community and employ artists. Launched on March 16, both surveys remain open for completion and future analysis.

## **ATTORNEY GENERAL**

The Ohio Attorney General's Office announced the cancellation of the annual Two Days in May Conference on Victim Assistance Friday due to the pandemic. It had been scheduled for May 21-22 at the Greater Columbus Convention Center.

Attorney General Dave Yost is moving to bolster law enforcement ranks challenged by exposure to the coronavirus by directing his Ohio Peace Officer Training Academy (OPOTA) to eliminate "red tape" and expedite exams for some 300 cadets while also waiving immediate training compliance for retired officers willing to return to the police force.

## **AUDITOR OF STATE**

Cuyahoga County leads the newly-announced Auditor of State Awards which recognize local government entities and school districts for having "clean" books with 10 government agencies receiving the recognition including the Great Lakes Council of Governments and East Cleveland City Schools.

Statewide, the bulk of the auditor awards went to school districts, community schools, educational service centers (ESC) and the like, and only one to a city government. Scioto County led small counties with seven awards, among them Portsmouth City School District and Scioto County Career Technical Center.

## **BUSINESS/CORPORATE**

The Ohio Restaurant Association (ORA) recently released Ohio-specific findings of a national survey measuring the damage done to the industry by coronavirus closures. March 1-22 saw Ohio restaurants lose an estimated \$698 million in sales and over 100,000 jobs, the survey found. While Gov. Mike DeWine has encouraged Ohioans to continue patronizing local restaurants through carry-out and delivery options, 87 percent of owners said they had lower sales during the period than in 2019. Ten percent said they had higher sales, while 3 percent said sales were around the same.

Honda, which previously suspended production due to coronavirus and then announced activity would resume on Tuesday, April 7 instead of March 31, announced other actions it will take as well. The automaker, which has several facilities in Ohio, will make an initial \$1 million pledge to food banks and meal programs across North America. It is also encouraging employees to engage in "virtual volunteering" in support of local nonprofits and matching individual gifts up to \$1,000 for food programs.

## **CENSUS**

Americans should respond to the 2020 Census according to where they usually live and sleep as of April 1. This year's census also has particular significance as the operations take place against the backdrop of a growing pandemic. Census statistics are used to determine the number of seats each state holds in the U.S. House of Representatives and informs legislative district boundaries. Additionally, census data informs the distribution of critical funding for hospitals, emergency services, schools and infrastructure each year over the next 10 years.

## **CHILDREN/FAMILIES**

Ohio's coronavirus response has included restrictions for only "essential" work and related child care measures, with centers required to obtain a temporary pandemic license and limit enrollment to families of essential workers. The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) and Groundwork Ohio, an early learning and development advocacy group, said that 1,032 centers and 1,099 family child care programs had received approval as of 4 p.m. on Friday, March 27.

The state of Ohio recently launched a new Infant Mental Health Credential for early childhood professionals, the first of its kind in the state. This credential provides professional development to support the social-emotional needs of Ohio's youngest children. Early childhood professionals who hold this credential will have met the state's minimum core standards.

## **CORONAVIRUS**

Confirmed cases of coronavirus rose steadily over the week, from 1,137 cases and 19 deaths on Friday, March 27 to 2,902 cases and 81 deaths on Thursday, April 2. Among steps announced by Gov. Mike DeWine and Ohio Department of Health Director Amy Acton to address the coronavirus pandemic in daily briefings over the week were the following:

- Extension of the stay-at-home order through Friday, May 1, with some revisions that take effect Monday, April 6, such as the closing of camps and the requirement that retailers set a cap on how many people can be inside stores at a time.
- Extension of the order closing all school buildings through Friday, May 1.
- Extension of remote work policies for state employees through Friday, May 1.
- More extensive deployment of the Ohio National Guard to aid in expanding hospital capacity.
- Plans for prison workshops to start making medical equipment
- Expansion of efforts to get public health messaging out in other languages.
- A statewide inventory of ventilators
- An executive order requesting deferral of payments on commercial loans for small businesses.
- An order requiring virus tests to be submitted to hospitals with testing capability, given that private labs have a backlog.

Gov. Mike DeWine signed Friday the emergency coronavirus legislation passed last week, HB197 (Powell-Merrin), issuing one line-item veto that he said corrects a drafting error. The legislation waives state testing requirements for schools, provides protection for people whose licenses are set to expire during the public health emergency, and allows delay of the state tax filing deadline to July 15, in line with the new federal deadline.

Federal, state and local political leaders need to resist the temptation to remove COVID-19 non-pharmaceutical interventions (NPIs) too quickly, according to University of Michigan Center for the

History of Medicine Director Howard Markel, the doctor who helped coin the phrase "flattening the curve."

After a day of back and forth between the DeWine administration and the federal Food and Drug Administration (FDA), the regulator late Sunday approved a technology created by Columbus-based Battelle that the company said could sterilize up to 80,000 N95 respirator masks per day.

The Ohio Board of Pharmacy (OBP) has added further guidance on its emergency rule limiting prescriptions of chloroquine or hydroxychloroquine for possible treatment of COVID-19, allowing the drugs to be used for presumptive patients in two more situations.

Following an official request from Gov. Mike DeWine and messages of support from Ohio's congressional delegation, President Donald Trump approved a major disaster declaration in Ohio in response to the coronavirus outbreak, opening up new funding through the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

As some Ohioans are running out of toilet paper during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency (Ohio EPA) is advising people not to flush any alternative product.

State agencies, the Ohio Manufacturers' Association, Ohio Hospital Association and others announced the formation of the Ohio Manufacturing Alliance to Fight COVID-19 in an effort to ramp up in-state production of medical equipment needed to address the coronavirus outbreak.

Either "Coronavirus Disease 2019" or "COVID-19" should be reported on death certificates for all decedents for whom the disease caused or is assumed to have caused or contributed to the person's death, according to new guidance from the Ohio Department of Health Bureau of Vital Statistics (ODH/VS).

Members of Ohio's congressional delegation touted the benefits of the of the \$2 trillion Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act passed by unanimous consent by the U.S. House of Representatives Friday and signed into law later that day by President Donald Trump.

The Ohio Department of Health (ODH) said late Tuesday that it had received the full allocation of medical personal protective equipment (PPE) from the Strategic National Stockpile. However, an ODH release said those supplies and the state's reserves will not be enough for "immediate or future needs" due to the increase in people with respiratory symptoms needing care.

While the final decision is up to local health departments, the Ohio Department of Health (ODH) told *Hannah News* Wednesday that golf courses are "likely not a health concern" if they operate as an outdoor recreation opportunity and follow physical distancing requirements.

Ohio Adjutant General John Harris said during a town hall livestreamed on Facebook Thursday that one of the top missions of the Ohio National Guard (ONG) in its response efforts against the spread of the novel coronavirus is expanding the state's medical capacity by converting current non-medical facilities into "temporary alternate care sites" where sick people who need treatment -- but not necessarily hospitalization -- can be cared for.

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to grow in Ohio and across the country, many people living in domestic violence situations may be at even greater risk for harm if they are isolated with an abuser or left without resources for help. "All or most of the remedies to slow the curve of the pandemic and to minimize chances for someone to catch the virus tend to increase isolation and decrease movement from the home, most often the place where domestic violence occurs. Add to that the emotional tension and stress resulting from isolation, fear of catching the virus, loss of income and social interactions, and you have the perfect storm for family violence -- both domestic violence and child abuse," Phyllis Carlson-Riehm of Action Ohio Coalition For Battered Women told *Hannah News*.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Molina Healthcare of Ohio announced Thursday that it is committing \$150,000 for the purchase of personal protective equipment (PPE), COVID-19 test kits, as well as other needed supplies to help protect providers, health care professionals, and those in need during the coronavirus pandemic that has swept Ohio and the nation.

## **CORRECTIONS**

The Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction (DRC) and Ohio Department of Youth Services (DYS) reported their first confirmed exposures to the coronavirus. DYS said Tuesday a part-time contractor who hadn't been to a facility since mid-February, was tested Monday, March 23. DRC said a staff member reported feeling symptoms Wednesday, March 25. The American Civil Liberties Union of Ohio, Juvenile Justice Coalition and others have been urging the state agencies to take steps to protect inmate health, including releasing some people from state custody.

## **CRIME AND PUNISHMENT**

Columbus City Attorney Zach Klein issued a warning Wednesday, saying those who try to fake COVID-19 symptoms in order to avoid getting a citation or arrest will face serious consequences. Klein said that those who have serious medical needs will be assisted, but if someone fakes coronavirus symptoms, they could face a number of charges, including falsification, a first-degree misdemeanor, and/or inducing panic, a first-degree misdemeanor up to a fourth-degree felony.

## **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

JobsOhio announced Tuesday that it was making a \$2 million long-term, low-interest loan to Appalachian Growth Capital (AGC) to support small businesses in Appalachian Ohio with financing during the coronavirus pandemic.

## **EDUCATION**

Ohio's public television stations shifted their broadcast schedules Monday to show up to 10 hours of daily programming aimed at helping teachers and students with limited broadband connections get educational content during the mandatory statewide closing of school buildings.

The Ohio High School Athletic Association (OHSAA) announced Thursday that the winter wrestling, basketball and ice hockey tournaments for the 2019-2020 year will not be held, after postponing them earlier in March. The start of spring seasons in softball, baseball, track and field, lacrosse and tennis is still postponed, which coincides with school closures.

Educators are adapting well to the statewide closing of all school buildings, though the situation is highlighting some equity gaps and a reckoning is coming in budget planning, Superintendent Paolo DeMaria said Tuesday. In an interview with *Hannah News*, the superintendent said peer-to-peer collaboration and a general message of encouragement are evident in his observations of the education system's reaction to a "sudden and drastic" shift to distance learning.

Auditor Keith Faber has filed an agreed order for a county judge's consideration that would allow completion of Electronic Classroom of Tomorrow's (ECOT) financial statements.

A Butler County school district's resolution allowing school staff to be armed in the wake of a 2016 shooting ran afoul of statutory restrictions on who can be authorized to carry concealed weapons in school, a state appeals court ruled recently. The resolution passed by the Madison Local Schools Board of Education authorizing several district employees to carry concealed guns on school grounds didn't follow the "clear and unambiguous dictates" of the relevant law, the Twelfth District Court of Appeals ruled, overturning a Butler County judge's decision in favor of the district.

The Ohio Department of Education (ODE) and the Ohio Department of Higher Education (ODHE) recently released new guidance and updates to previously existing statutes and rules for the College Credit Plus (CCP) program in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The new guidance and changes came at the recommendation of Chancellor Randy Gardner and Superintendent Paolo DeMaria. Updates also came after Gov. Mike DeWine signed HB197 (Powell-Merrin), which granted new flexibility to Gardner, in consultation with DeMaria, to waive, extend, suspend or modify requirements of the CCP program in response to the coronavirus outbreak.

## **ELECTIONS 2020**

The Ohio Supreme Court Tuesday dismissed a lawsuit originally filed by the Ohio Democratic Party (ODP) challenging a directive issued by Secretary of State Frank LaRose setting a new election date, saying the case is now moot in light of the General Assembly passing HB197 (Merrin-Powell).

The League of Women Voters of Ohio and the A. Philip Randolph Institute Monday filed a lawsuit in federal court challenging provisions of HB197 (Merrin-Powell) that extend absentee balloting for Ohio's primary until Tuesday, April 28, arguing the law will hurt minority voters.

A group circulating petitions for a November constitutional amendment to raise Ohio's minimum wage to \$13 has filed suit in Franklin County to ease filing requirements under orders issued by the Ohio Department of Health (ODH) limiting gatherings due to the coronavirus.

Ohio Democratic Party (ODP) Chairman David Pepper signed a letter along with the chair of 50 other state Democratic parties calling for "immediate federal and state action to ensure that every eligible voter has the opportunity to cast their ballot without the risk of contracting or spreading COVID-19." Such measures would include a vote-by-mail system, as well as extensions of voter registration dates, expansions of voter registration options, and \$2 billion in funding.

Secretary of State Frank LaRose Thursday released the postcard that his office will be sending to Ohio voters as part of the effort to complete the 2020 primary election.

The 2020 Democratic National Convention has been delayed a month due to coronavirus concerns, convention organizers announced Thursday. The convention had been originally scheduled for July

13-16 in Milwaukee, WI. Organizers said the 2020 convention will now be held the week of Aug. 17, "providing our team more time to determine the most appropriate structure for this historic event.

The Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee (DCCC) said Thursday that it is adding Ohio's 10th Congressional District to its "offensive battlefield." The seat is currently held by U.S. Rep. Mike Turner (R-Centerville), who has fended off strong challenges by the DCCC in the past. Currently, Eric Moyer and Desiree Tims are competing for the Democratic nomination for the seat. Kathi Flanders and John Anderson are challenging Turner for the Republican nomination.

## **EMPLOYMENT/UNEMPLOYMENT**

The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) released data on the state unemployment rate for February, though it predates a historic spike in unemployment claims due to coronavirus in March. The unemployment rate remained 4.1 percent, unchanged from January. Ohio's nonagricultural wage and salary employment increased 7,800 over the month, from a revised 5,596,800 in January to 5,604,600 in February.

The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) is asking individuals filing unemployment compensation claims to be "patient" while the agency works to improve the system amid "historic demand" caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. "Even with the record-setting numbers for March 15-21, I can tell you that one day last week we recorded the highest ever one-day total of claims -- so the pace of claims is not slowing down and is in fact accelerating -- and we were already at a record high for March 15-21," ODJFS spokesperson Bret Crow told *Hannah News* in an email.

For the second straight week, the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) has reported a record high number of weekly unemployment claims as fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic continues to grow. For the week ending March 28, the department reported 272,117 initial jobless claims to the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL), according to a news release from ODJFS. Last week, the department reported 187,780 initial jobless claims.

## **ENERGY**

It took hundreds of Davis-Besse employees and more than 1,000 contract workers nearly a month to complete 1,200 separate tasks required to refuel and perform preventive maintenance at the labor-intensive nuclear plant one mile from Lake Erie in Ottawa County. Energy Harbor, successor owner to the bankrupt FirstEnergy Solutions (FES), says the Oak Harbor station returned to service at 5:34 a.m. Friday after a Feb. 29 shutdown for its biennial overhaul.

## **ENVIRONMENT**

The state of Ohio and federal authorities will receive a \$2.6 million penalty from British Petroleum (BP) Products North America Inc. and BP-Husky Refining LLC to settle alleged clean-air and hazardous substance reporting violations at its Toledo refinery. The company will pay another \$1.2 million for lead abatement within 18 miles of the plant.

A total of up to \$10,036,000 in bond financing for five Ohio businesses has been approved by the Ohio Air Quality Development Authority (OAQDA), the agency has announced. The funding will allow the businesses to purchase and install equipment that will reduce emissions and improve air quality in Auglaize, Montgomery, Franklin and Clermont counties, OAQDA said in a news release.

## **FEDERAL**

U.S. Sen. Rob Portman (R-OH) told reporters it has been a "very intense" last couple of days as he detailed various aspects of the federal COVID-19 response through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act (CARES Act) as well as other federal actions.

Sen. Portman announced Monday he would be donating his salary through the end of May to five Ohio organizations supporting coronavirus response efforts: the Cleveland Foundation COVID-19 Rapid Response Fund, the Columbus Foundation Emergency Response Fund, the United Way and Greater Cincinnati Foundation local nonprofit fund, the Southeast Ohio Food Bank and the Greater Toledo Community Foundation Covid-19 Response.

## **GAMING/GAMBLING**

The lack of people congregating in bars, restaurants, racinos and other facilities that offer Ohio Lottery games due to the COVID-19 pandemic has already caused the state to lose millions of dollars in profits, Ohio Lottery Chief Financial Officer Greg Bowers and Ohio Lottery Director Pat McDonald said Monday.

## **GENERAL ASSEMBLY/STATEHOUSE**

House and Senate employees will continue to work from home until May based on new distancing guidelines issued by President Donald Trump on Sunday.

The Capitol Square Review and Advisory Board's renovation program for the Statehouse parking garage began its third phase Monday, March 30. In addition to making some parking spaces unavailable, phase three will result in the temporary closing of the electric vehicle charging stations and the Third Street and State Street entrances. Drivers will have to enter the garage on the North side of the Statehouse at the Broad Street entrance.

Joint Committee on Agency Rule Review (JCARR) Executive Director Larry Wolpert sent a memo to members of the committee Thursday saying that the Monday, April 20, meeting has been cancelled due to the coronavirus restrictions. Wolpert said that JCARR staff has reviewed the rules on the agenda, and if there are rules that appear to have a prong issue or could expect testimony, staff will ask the agency to put the rule in "to be refiled" status and refile the rule at a later date so it would be on the next meeting agenda. The next JCARR meeting is currently scheduled for Monday, May 18 at 1:30 p.m.

## **GOVERNOR**

Gov. Mike DeWine and legislative leaders announced the indefinite postponement of the governor's "State of the State" address, which was to take place Tuesday, March 31, because of the coronavirus emergency.

Gov. Mike DeWine Monday appointed James P. Salyer to serve as a judge on the Vinton County Court of Common Pleas, General Division. Salyer, of McArthur, will assume office on Sunday, April 26, and must run for election on Nov. 3, 2020, for the remainder of the term ending Dec. 31, 2022. Salyer replaces Judge Jeffery Simmons who retired from the Vinton County Court of Common Pleas, General Division on Feb. 29, 2020.



## **HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES**

Given Ohio's state of emergency due to coronavirus, the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) and Ohio Department of Medicaid (ODM) have issued guidance to modify processing procedures for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Ohio Works First (OWF), and Medicaid, according to a release from Cuyahoga Job and Family Services.

## **INSURANCE**

The enactment of HB197 (Powell-Merrin) in response to the coronavirus pandemic has enabled the Ohio Department of Insurance (ODI) to offer relief for individuals and business entities whose licenses expire during the state of emergency. An ODI release said HB197 provisions cover licenses for major lines agents, limited line agents, title agents, title insurance marketing representatives, managing general agents, public insurance adjusters and agents, reinsurance intermediary brokers and managers, surety bail bond agents, surplus lines brokers, third party administrators and viatical settlement brokers.

## **JUDICIAL**

The Ohio Supreme Court announced Friday that the state Judicial College will "repurpose" many face-to-face courses as online sessions and webinars until June 1 due to the pandemic. Chief Justice Maureen O'Connor issued an order Monday waiving time limits and deadlines set in court administrative rules, complementing last week's General Assembly action to delay statutes of limitations for criminal and civil matters.

The Ohio Supreme Court announced Tuesday that justices will hear oral arguments scheduled Tuesday, April 7-Wednesday, April 8 by videoconference from their respective chambers, with counsel for each side presenting their case remotely.

## **LIQUOR/ALCOHOL**

The Ohio Department of Commerce's Division of Liquor Control reported that liquor sales spiked 26 percent for March 1 through March 29 compared to the same period in 2019. The 2020 period saw \$123.8 million in sales, compared to almost \$98 million in 2019 and \$93.5 million in 2018.

## **LOCAL GOVERNMENT**

A three-judge commission appointed by Chief Justice Maureen O'Connor suspended Republican Mayor David Smith of Bridgeport from office Tuesday pending the outcome of criminal charges against him for theft in office and tampering with records, resulting in losses of more than \$20,000.

## **MARIJUANA/HEMP**

More than 100,000 Ohioans have received a doctor's recommendation to use medical marijuana, according to the latest statistics from the Ohio Medical Marijuana Control Program (MMCP). The Ohio Board of Pharmacy (OBP) said Tuesday that a total of 102,000 recommendations have been issued under the MMCP through February.

## **PEOPLE**

American Municipal Power (AMP) veteran Jolene Thompson took over as president and CEO Wednesday as other members of the management team assume new duties at AMP and its nonprofit advocacy partner, Ohio Municipal Electric Association (OMEA). Adam Ward, AMP's former vice president of environmental affairs, sustainability and energy policy, will take on Thompson's old responsibilities as senior vice president of member services and legislative affairs. Michael Beirne will continue as vice president of member services and legislative affairs under Ward while also filling Thompson's former role as OMEA's unpaid executive director. The position performs all functions for the association, a separate entity with its own board.

## **POLLS/STUDIES**

A new study out of Ohio State University (OSU) suggests the way social media sites often jumble content by mixing real news stories with humorous posts and memes may make viewers less likely to check sources. The study found that people viewing a blend of news and entertainment on a social media site tended to pay less attention to the source of content they consumed -- meaning they could easily mistake satire or fiction for real news.

## **STATE GOVERNMENT**

The Ohio Ethics Commission said this week that it will be extending the filing deadline for the 2019 financial disclosure statement forms to Wednesday, July 15, the same as the federal and state tax filing dates. The forms report on personal financial information for the previous calendar year, and the general filing deadline, which applies to most filers, has been May 15 each year. The commission is extending the deadline in a one-time extension.

## **UTILITIES**

The Public Utilities Commission of Ohio (PUCO) is set to rule on a far-reaching policy question that will determine the state's regulatory power over a major, emerging sector of electric generation and delivery in the Buckeye State. The commission wants to know whether an "electric vehicle (EV) charging service is a public utility." Ohio's distribution utilities say it depends, and that they are "uniquely positioned" to build out and supply regulated EV charging. The Ohio Consumers' Counsel (OCC), Industrial Energy Users (IEU) Ohio and many other stakeholders say EV stations should remain competitive services.

## **WORKERS' COMPENSATION**

The Ohio Bureau of Workers' Compensation (BWC) announced Monday that it was taking further actions to help businesses during the coronavirus pandemic. BWC previously gave private and public employer members the option to defer monthly premium installment amounts due for March, April and May until June 1, at which time the matter will be reconsidered.

**LEGISLATIVE ACTIVITY:**

**SENATE:** No legislation activity.

**HOUSE:**

**CONSIDERATION OF SENATE AMENDMENTS**

HB197 OMNIBUS MEASURES ON CORONAVIRUS (Rep. Jena Powell, Rep. Derek Merrin) To continue essential operations of state government and maintain the continuity of the state tax code in response to the declared pandemic and global health emergency related to COVID-19, to make appropriations, and to declare an emergency.

House Does Concur, Vote 92-0, Emergency Clause 92-0