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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 study from Ohio University looking at overdose deaths and average life expectancy found that more than one million years of life have been lost in Ohio from overdose deaths between Jan. 1, 2009 and Dec. 31, 2018. The Ohio Alliance for Innovation in Population Health (OAIPH) - a collaborative formed by Ohio University's College of Health Sciences and Professions (CHSP), other higher education partners, health systems, insurers, policy groups and population health advocates -- recently reviewed overdose death data for the state, including preliminary data for 2018, to determine the extent to which overdose deaths contributed to premature mortality.

The newly created Ohio Narcotics Intelligence Center (ONIC) will help local law enforcement more effectively arrest and prosecute drug traffickers across the state, Gov. Mike DeWine said Wednesday. "Ohio's drug task forces play a critical role in the fight against addiction, which is why I believe it is absolutely essential the state support these task forces in every way we can. The creation of ONIC does that," DeWine said during a press conference announcing the new facility at Ohio Department of Public Safety (ODPS) headquarters in Columbus.

AGRICULTURE

Ohio farmers will soon be allowed to legally cultivate hemp, and consumers can immediately buy hemp-derived products such as cannabidiol (CBD) at Ohio retailers after Gov. Mike DeWine signed SB57 (S. Huffman-Hill) Tuesday at the Ohio State Fair.

The Ohio Department of Agriculture (ODAg) has hired a new deputy director of children's initiatives, ODAg Director Dorothy Pelanda told lawmakers during the annual Joint Agriculture Committee meeting at the Ohio State Fair. Cathy Corbitt's responsibilities include bringing healthy fresh food education and awareness to children, Pelanda said, noting Corbitt also will be responsible for connecting the agricultural community with education partners and community programs.

Farmers in 40 Ohio counties can now seek potential relief from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) following the federal government's approval of disaster designations due to rain, flooding or other severe weather conditions. USDA Secretary Sonny Perdue designated several counties primary natural disaster areas due to production losses from extreme weather events during the 2019 crop year, according to the governor's office.

The first legal hemp plants in Ohio soil since World War II went into the ground on the Ohio Department of Agriculture's (ODAg) property in Reynoldsburg on Thursday.

ATTORNEY GENERAL

More than 52,000 Ohioans are among consumers hit by a national data breach at Premera Blue Cross, which will pay \$10 million to settle claims by dozens of states including Ohio. Attorney General Dave Yost says Premera failed to secure confidential health and personal information for 10.4 million U.S. consumers, giving hackers "unrestricted" access to client files.

BALLOT ISSUES

A group seeking to put a referendum on energy legislation HB6 (Callender-Wilkin) before voters filed its summary petition language and initial signatures with the secretary of state and attorney general's offices on Monday. Ohioans Against Corporate Bailouts (OACB), a group formed to overturn HB6 with the backing of environmental, renewable and other energy interests, said it filed 2,866 signatures along with summary petition language. The group needs 1,000 valid signatures for the attorney general's office to review the proposed referendum.

FY20-21 BUDGET

The final version of HB166 (Oelslager), the biennial budget signed by Gov. Mike DeWine earlier this month, includes two policy changes added by the Senate and retained by the conference committee that move the primary election date back for the 2020 presidential race and reduce the number of required precinct election officials.

Gov. Mike DeWine Tuesday pointed to services such as those offered at Highland Elementary School in Columbus as an example of the type of wrap-around services schools around the state can now offer thanks to increased funding in the FY20-21 budget, HB166 (Oelslager). It includes \$675 million for schools to better address students' social and emotional needs. The governor said those

funds will be used for services such as student wellness programs, before and after school programs, and more mental health support to help students to cope with stress and trauma.

The state has finally provided county public defenders' offices what they have long sought by agreeing to cover up to 100 percent of indigent defense costs in the newly signed budget, including full funding for death penalty cases. Gov. Mike DeWine proposed and the House and Senate agreed to nearly double the \$66.7 million appropriated for indigent defense in FY19 by providing \$128.5 million in FY20 and as much as \$163.6 million in FY21 -- the latter increase consisting entirely of General Revenue Funds (GRF).

CHILDREN/FAMILIES

Gov. Mike DeWine announced 32 members of his Early Childhood Advisory Council, all serving terms that started Wednesday and continue "at the pleasure of the governor."

CIVIL RIGHTS

The Women's Suffrage Centennial Commission (WSCC) held its first meeting Monday afternoon, discussing potential plans to celebrate next year's 100th anniversary of ratification of the 19th Amendment giving women the right to vote. The second week of August represents the "sweet spot" for a key commemorative event, Secretary of State Frank LaRose told commission members, as it falls between the Democratic and Republican national conventions, the start of the school year and the Ohio State Fair.

CRIME AND PUNISHMENT

For the first time in the organization's 20-year history, the Ohio Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) Task Force is receiving funding in the state operating budget. The final version of HB166 (Oelslager) includes a Senate-added amendment offered by Sen. Tim Schaffer (R-Lancaster) and Rep. Kent Smith (D-Euclid) to more than double ICAC funding by providing \$1 million over the biennium, or \$500,000 in each fiscal year.

Many people have an idea of what human trafficking looks like in their head, but each case is unique and the issue affects people and communities in many different ways. That's what two advocates from Columbus said Wednesday during a Columbus Metropolitan Club panel on the subject.

Senate President Larry Obhof (R-Medina) offered no firm sentiments Wednesday on proposals to lift the statute of limitations for sexual assault cases, noting lawmakers had recently extended the statutes. He cited lawmakers' work on 131-HB6 (Kunze-LaTourette), which extended the statute of limitation from 20 to 25 years, with an additional five-year window when DNA evidence identifies a suspect. Any House-passed proposals on changing the statute of limitations will get "a full and fair set of hearings," Obhof said.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Gov. Mike DeWine's administration announced Monday the approval of assistance for 12 projects expected to create 3,962 new jobs and retain 717 jobs statewide. During its monthly meeting, the Ohio Tax Credit Authority (TCA) reviewed economic development proposals brought by JobsOhio and its regional partners. Collectively, the projects are expected to result in more than \$153 million

in new payroll and spur more than \$705 million in investments across Ohio. They include two projects by Amazon, expected to collectively create 2,500 jobs and generate \$77.8 million in new annual payroll.

The Ohio Aerospace and Aviation Technology Committee (OAATC) heard two presentations Tuesday on efforts to make the state a nexus for research and development of unmanned aviation, which represents further military uses and potential civil and commercial applications.

The Regional Economic Development Alliance Study Committee set goals for the coming months at its meeting Tuesday, with legislative leaders recommending that members split into workgroups to develop potential legislation on various subjects. In a discussion led by Rep. Steve Hambley (R-Brunswick) and Sen. Rob McColley (R-Napoleon), it was determined that committee members would join four workgroups based on interest. According to McColley, the workgroups will focus on the following areas: revenue sharing among jurisdictions; collaboration between institutions of higher education and the private sector and better collaborations among higher education institutions; tweaks to existing programs; and better alignment of infrastructure decisions based on economic development planning.

EDUCATION

Members of the State Board of Education's workgroup on dropout prevention and recovery school report cards discussed on Monday the concept of creating a "graduation eligible" category to define which students should be counted in the four- through eight-year graduation rate measures on the report cards.

State Superintendent Paolo DeMaria would receive a 2.75 percent raise, the standard increase for salaried state employees, under a resolution approved Tuesday by the State Board of Education's Executive Committee. Notably, the raise would not include a bonus as in years past, with members citing the need for improvement in his relationship with the board, communication and policy advocacy. It will go before the full board at its next meeting in September. Following a lengthy closed executive session in which members discussed DeMaria's performance, they collectively expressed dissatisfaction with the current method of evaluating the superintendent based on his goals.

With no end in sight for parallel litigation, a closeout audit pending and apparent interest from the FBI, the judge overseeing remaining assets from the Electronic Classroom of Tomorrow (ECOT) approved about \$300,000 Tuesday for a new system to preserve the defunct online charter school's data. Richard Kruse, an asset management expert appointed to help mind ECOT's affairs, told Franklin County Common Pleas Judge Michael Holbrook that the aging system now housing the school's information is suffering hardware failures at an increasing rate.

Attorney General Dave Yost's office weighed in recently on interpreting laws for schools wanting armed security on their premises, responding to a request for legal advice from the Cuyahoga County Prosecutor's Office. Prosecutor Michael O'Malley asked Yost in June for a formal opinion on the matter, prompted by Parma Municipal School District's hiring of a safety and security supervisor. The district superintendent would like this person to be able to carry a gun on school property while on duty.

The Ohio Department of Education (ODE) recently announced rural school districts that will participate in a grant-funded initiative in partnership with Harvard University to address chronic absenteeism and college readiness and enrollment. ODE and Harvard's Center for Education Policy Research in February won a \$10 million, five-year grant from the U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences to fund the initiative in Ohio and New York schools.

ELECTIONS

A new report by the U.S. Senate Select Committee on Intelligence found the Russian government targeted U.S. election infrastructure at the state and local level from at least 2014 into at least 2017, prompting a statement from Ohio Secretary of State Frank LaRose on measures his office has taken to try to prevent interference in upcoming elections.

As a deadline approaches to remove inactive voters from the rolls in Ohio, Democrats are urging Secretary of State Frank LaRose to look at other options. Rep. Bride Sweeney (D-Cleveland), who has been working with LaRose on some form of automatic voter registration in Ohio in which Ohioans will be registered to vote or have registrations updated when they interact with state government, sent LaRose a letter Monday saying Ohio's supplemental process, which purges voters after they miss multiple federal elections, and which was upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court, will remove thousands of eligible voters and infringe on the right to vote.

After cleaning out their funds to win offices in 2018, Gov. Mike DeWine and other statewide officeholders began rebuilding their campaign funds in the first half of this year, according to campaign finance reports filed Wednesday. It was the semi-annual filing deadline for all candidates who will not be on the ballot this year, including statewide officeholders and legislative candidates. Gov. Mike DeWine's campaign fund reported \$298,820 in contributions and spent \$107,149. The campaign has \$439,855 on hand, though it still owes \$4 million that DeWine personally lent the campaign during the 2018 election cycle.

Secretary of State Frank LaRose released his office's "Registration Reset List" on Thursday, which consists of voter registrations identified by county boards of elections as those inactive for six years that can be cancelled under Ohio's supplemental process.

ELECTIONS 2019

Voters in five counties will be deciding on tax levies and one bond issue at a special election on Tuesday, Aug. 6.

ELECTIONS 2020

Rep. Mark Romanchuk (R-Mansfield) became the latest House member to eye a move to the other chamber in 2020, announcing Monday that he will run for the 22nd Senate District seat currently held by Senate President Larry Obhof (R-Medina), who is term-limited.

Gov. Mike DeWine said he plans to attend the "Keep America Great" rally on Thursday, Aug. 1 in Cincinnati. The event, to be held at U.S. Bank Arena, will feature remarks from both President Donald Trump and Vice President Mike Pence.

Ahead of his visit to Cincinnati on Thursday, President Donald Trump's campaign announced his re-election leadership team for Ohio. Clayton Henson will serve as Republican National Committee (RNC) regional political director, while Steve Buckingham will be RNC state director. Bob Paduchik, who led Trump's Ohio campaign in 2016, will be RNC Ohio senior advisor. All of Ohio's statewide constitutional officeholders as well as Republican members of its congressional delegation, House Speaker Larry Householder (R-Glenford) and Senate President Larry Obhof (R-Medina), were named honorary state chairs.

We the People Convention, led by Tom Zawistowski, said this week that it was joining with other TEA Party groups around Ohio and will be aligning with the National Rifle Association's (NRA) Institute for Legislative Action (ILA) to help carry Ohio for President Donald Trump in 2020.

ENERGY

Ohio Attorney General Dave Yost said Wednesday that he has joined a 16-state alliance urging the U.S. Supreme Court to review, and ultimately overturn, a ruling that has delayed construction of the Atlantic Coast Pipeline. The coalition's brief, filed Monday, argues that a federal appeals court was inaccurate in ruling the U.S. Forest Service lacked authority to grant the Atlantic Coast Pipeline rights-of-way through forestland beneath the Appalachian National Scenic Trail.

FEDERAL

U.S. Sen. Sherrod Brown (D-OH) introduced his Stock Buyback Reform and Worker Dividend Act Wednesday, telling reporters on a conference call that the bill would mandate that, for every \$1 million in stock buybacks purchased by a corporation, \$1 would be paid to every employee, including temporary workers and contractors.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY/STATEHOUSE

Hannah News' interview series with freshman legislators featured Rep. Gil Blair (D-Mineral Ridge). A lifelong resident of the Mahoning Valley, Blair has long been involved in local politics and the justice system in the region. Most recently, he's witnessed firsthand the impact that the closure of the Lordstown General Motors plant has had on the area and its residents.

Ohio Supreme Court Justice Judith French swore in Douglas "DJ" Swearingen (R-Huron) as the newest member of the House at a nonvoting session Thursday, one day after Rep. Steve Arndt (R-Port Clinton) officially retired. Swearingen is an attorney at Wickens, Herzer, Panza and chairman of the Erie County Republican Party.

GOVERNOR

Gov. Mike DeWine signed a bill this week granting charter county hospitals the same intellectual property protections given to higher education institutions and their medical centers, the governor's office confirmed Thursday. HB50 (Greenspan), signed Tuesday, ensures that all rights and ownership of intellectual property, such as patents or other inventions, discovered or developed by employees or groups at a charter county hospital remain its property.

Appointments made during the week include the following:

- Sarah V. Ackman of Columbus (Franklin County) to the Juvenile Sex Offender Treatment Program Certification Board for a term beginning Aug. 1, 2019 and continuing at the pleasure of the governor.

- Todd M. Dunlap of Cadiz (Harrison County) to the Belmont College Board of Trustees for a term beginning Aug. 1, 2019 and ending May 12, 2022.

- George R. Horne Jr. of Cleveland (Cuyahoga County) to the Board of Embalmers and Funeral Directors for a term beginning Aug. 1, 2019 and ending June 30, 2024.

- Thomas N. Taneff of New Albany (Franklin County) reappointed to the Board of Embalmers and Funeral Directors for a term beginning July 1, 2019 and ending June 30, 2024.

GREAT LAKES

Legislation co-sponsored by Ohio's two senators and eight of its U.S. House members would reauthorize the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) for another five years and increase its funding. U.S. Sens. Sherrod Brown (D-OH) and Rob Portman (R-OH) and U.S. Reps. Tim Ryan (D-Niles), Marcy Kaptur (D Toledo), Dave Joyce (R-Novelty), Anthony Gonzalez (R-Westlake), Steve Stivers (R-Columbus), Marcia Fudge (D-Columbus), Bob Gibbs (R-Lakeville) and Mike Turner (R-Centerville) introduced HR4031, the GLRI Act of 2019. It would go into effect when the current GLRI expires at the end of federal fiscal year (FFY) 2021.

HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Two Ohio technology hubs for health centers will receive nearly \$1.7 million as part of a \$42 million grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). The department's Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) awarded the grants for health center controlled networks (HCCN), which the agency describes as "groups of health centers collaborating to improve operational and clinical practices by making technology easier for providers and patients to use, increasing the security of patient information and using data to improve patient care."

Gov. Mike DeWine on Tuesday issued Executive Order (EO) 2019-19D, which addresses payment and policies for behavioral health agencies certified by the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (OhioMHAS) and paid by the state's Medicaid program under Ohio's "behavioral health redesign." According to Teresa Lampl, executive director for the Ohio Council of Behavioral Health and Family Services Providers, these rules make rate increases in key areas where they have seen services reduced and allow providers more flexibility to better use their personnel.

The American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network (ACS CAN) released its latest "How Do You Measure Up?" rating of states on key public policies, which it said will help prevent and reduce suffering and death from cancer. ACS CAN gave Ohio failing grades in two of the eight areas measured this year. The report rates states in eight specific areas of public policy that ACS CAN says can help fight cancer: increased access to care through Medicaid, access to palliative care, balanced pain control policies, cigarette tax levels, smoke-free laws, funding for tobacco prevention and cessation programs, cessation coverage under Medicaid, and restricting indoor tanning devices for people under 18.

HUMAN SERVICES

A web-based program that has been used by more than one million Ohioans to file taxes and identify available government benefits is expected to go dark on Wednesday, July 31, Ohio Association of Foodbanks (OAF) Executive Director Lisa Hamler-Fugitt told *Hannah News*. Hamler-Fugitt said the beginning of the end basically occurred when the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) decided to focus on its Ohio Benefits system, and in doing so pulled funding from the Ohio Benefit Bank.

JUDICIAL

The Ohio Supreme Court accepted an appeal filed by the city of Alliance against Marlinton Local Schools on how local jurisdictions should split settlement proceeds when a business breaches the terms of its development incentives. The two Stark County jurisdictions are at odds over distribution of nearly \$1 million paid by Terry's Tire Town for violating a contract under which it was granted a 15-year, 100 percent property tax exemption to build a facility for its wholesale operations in an industrial park.

The Ohio Supreme Court hired Douglas M. Nelson as its new "reporter of decisions." Nelson, who joined the Supreme Court in 2015, served as an assistant reporter before assuming this role. As an assistant reporter, he edited drafts of opinions and oversaw the preparation and posting of case announcements and administrative actions to the Court's website.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Former Ohio Attorney General Marc Dann has filed a federal lawsuit on behalf of four Ohio residents against the village of New Richmond and the corporation that runs its traffic camera program, arguing that the village didn't get permission from the state before installing speed and red light cameras along U.S. 52, which is maintained by the state, last spring.

MARIJUANA/HEMP

There are now 25 dispensaries cleared to operate under the Ohio Medical Marijuana Control Program. The Ohio Board of Pharmacy recently awarded certificates of operation to Debbie's Dispensary, located at 1088 N. High St. in Hillsboro; Medicinals LLC, located at 1361 Georgesville Rd. in Columbus; and Rise, located at 1222 Prospect Ave. E. in Cleveland.

The Ohio Department of Commerce (DOC) has placed an administrative hold on THC-infused water-soluble drops manufactured by Standard Wellness after the medical marijuana company issued a voluntary recall of the product. "Late Friday night there were some photos placed on social media that had some images of kind of darker substances in the drops," Standard Wellness Director of External Relations Brandon Lynaugh told *Hannah News*.

MILITARY AFFAIRS

Cyberattacks on government agencies and critical infrastructure are an increasing concern and are being incorporated into the Ohio National Guard's preparedness exercise this year, set to be the largest in its history. Maj. Gen. John Harris, Ohio's adjutant general, discussed elements of the

exercise with *Hannah News*, noting he could not share all details as it is a test of participants' abilities to respond to unknown circumstances.

To honor the life and service of Pfc. Brandon J. Kreischer, 20, of Stryker, Gov. Mike DeWine has ordered that flags of the United States and the state of Ohio be flown at half-staff at all public buildings and grounds throughout Williams County, the Ohio Statehouse, Vern Riffe Center, and Rhodes State Office Tower until sunset on the day of his funeral.

NEWS MEDIA

Spurred by the upcoming closing of the *Youngstown Vindicator* newspaper, left-leaning nonprofit Policy Matters Ohio released a report detailing the marked decline of newspaper jobs statewide, due in part to the rise of digital media. According to the report, "Breaking News: Newspaper Closures Hurt Ohio Communities," the number of newspaper publishing industry jobs was halved between 2004 and 2017, falling from 15,643 jobs in 2004 to only 6,506 jobs in 2017 -- a total decrease of 58.4 percent. These jobs included reporters, graphic designers, editors and photographers.

OHIO STATE FAIR

Gov. Mike DeWine planted a Northern Red Oak tree in Governor's Grove at the Natural Resources Park during the 2019 Ohio State Fair. DeWine is the seventh Ohio governor to add a tree to the grove, according to a news release from DeWine's office.

The newest members were inducted into the Ohio State Fair Hall of Fame during the fair on Thursday, Aug. 1. Gov. Mike DeWine participated in the ceremony. Established in 1976, the Ohio State Fair Hall of Fame recognizes individuals who have made outstanding contributions toward making the Ohio State Fair one of America's premier expositions.

TAXATION

Ohio's sales tax holiday for back-to-school shopping will take place this weekend. Shoppers can make purchases without paying state sales tax for clothing items costing \$75 or less; school supplies costing \$20 per item or less; and school instructional materials priced at \$20 per item or less. The holiday opens at 12 a.m. Friday, Aug. 2 and ends at 11:59 p.m. on Sunday, Aug. 4.

TRANSPORTATION/INFRASTRUCTURE

With a line of law enforcement officers standing behind them, Sens. Joe Uecker (R-Loveland) and Jay Hottinger (R-Newark) announced the introduction of SB179, which would return to current law the requirement for every vehicle registered in Ohio to have a front license plate.

UTILITIES

The Public Utilities Commission of Ohio ordered Wednesday that an unauthorized Trumbull County gas distribution company come into compliance quickly or shut down, saying the outfit has operated for years outside commission authority and failed to cooperate with state enforcement efforts. The finding and order against One Source Energy also require Dominion Energy Ohio to cease transporting gas to One Source by Friday, Sept. 6. They also levy a \$25,000 fine and direct the Ohio Attorney General's Office to take action in court against the company.

WORKERS' COMPENSATION

The Bureau of Workers' Compensation's (BWC) FY20-21 budget in HB80 (Oelslager) will help advance better information, technology, communications and customer service, BWC Administrator Stephanie McCloud told the board of directors Friday. HB80 was signed by Gov. Mike DeWine on Monday, July 22 and provides around \$319.8 million in FY20 and \$324.8 million in FY21.

LEGISLATIVE ACTIVITY:

SENATE:

No legislative activity to report.

HOUSE:

No legislative activity to report.