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Week in Review
Monday, September 28, 2015

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. Please note the issues are listed alphabetically and in no way signify the level of importance:

AUDITOR OF STATE

Auditor Dave Yost said he'll repeat his recent attendance audit of charter schools, adding new components to collect additional data and also including a sample of traditional public schools for comparison purposes. The auditor, who's weighed in periodically on General Assembly discussions of charter school regulation, also said he thinks the recent Ohio Supreme Court case on operators' contracts with charter schools might signal big changes.

BALLOT ISSUES

The Ohio Ballot Board unanimously approved new wording for the marijuana legalization

amendment that will appear on the ballot this November, but left intact the word "monopoly" in the State Issue 3's title.

The American Civil Liberties Union of Ohio (ACLU) threw its support behind Issue 3, the marijuana legalization amendment, saying it has long opposed the criminalization of marijuana.

As it waits for voters to weigh in on whether to legalize marijuana as part of Issue 3, ResponsibleOhio announced Tuesday that it was filing 236,759 signatures with the secretary of state's office on an initiated statute that would let Ohioans with previous marijuana convictions expunge their criminal records. Ian James, the executive director of ResponsibleOhio, said the "Fresh Start Act" moves the discussion on decriminalizing marijuana forward. He noted that Ohio would be taking this step earlier in the process than other states that have legalized marijuana for medical and recreational use.

BUSINESS/CORPORATE

Ohio Secretary of State Jon Husted announced Friday that 7,512 new entities filed to do business in Ohio during August 2015. This number is in line with the same month in 2014 when 7,545 entities filed.

CONGRESS

U.S. Rep. John Boehner on Friday announced his intent to resign from Congress Oct. 30.

"It's the right time to do it and, frankly, I'm entirely comfortable doing it," an emotional Rep. Boehner said at a Washington, D.C. news conference. "This turmoil that's been churning now for a couple of months is not good for the members and it's not good for the institutions."

The West Chester Republican said he initially planned to resign last year but decided to postpone until November 2015 when former House Majority Leader Eric Cantor lost in the primary.

ELECTIONS 2015

Secretary of State Jon Husted said that voting for military and overseas voters began on Saturday, Sept. 19, for the upcoming General Election.

ELECTIONS 2016

Ohio Appeals Court Judge Pat DeWine officially launched his bid for Ohio Supreme Court last Monday, saying he will be running for one of two open seats on the Court in 2016.

The selection of Ohio's Wright State University (WSU) as the site for the first 2016 presidential debate on Monday, Sept. 26, was hailed by many as further proof of the state's importance to the outcome of the upcoming presidential election.

EMPLOYMENT/UNEMPLOYMENT

Ohio added 14,600 jobs in August, the third most in the nation, and the unemployment rate fell to 4.7 percent, the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) announced. ODJFS said the nonfarm wage and salary employment went from a revised 5,396,500 in July to 5,411,100 in August, taking the unemployment rate from 5 percent to the current 4.7 percent. The number of unemployed workers fell by 21,000 in August, going from 286,000 in July to 265,000.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY/STATEHOUSE

For its fourth and final hearing, the Ohio House Healthcare Efficiencies Study Committee headed to the Cincinnati area, where it heard from Ohio Department of Health (ODH) Director Richard Hodges. In addition, testimony was taken on the issues of children's health, innovative medical savings and population health. Hodges addressed population health, telling the committee that the "health care environment is changing due to President Obama's Affordable Care Act, the extension of Medicaid coverage in Ohio, and efforts to increase value in health care spending in Ohio."

Senate President Keith Faber (R-Celina) introduced legislation last week to block state funding to organizations that promote or perform abortions, as well as affiliates of such organizations, citing the national discussion on defunding Planned Parenthood in the wake of controversial undercover videos on the group's fetal tissue programs. Abortion rights advocates responded that the legislation could have far reaching health consequences.

The tax law cleanup bill, SB 208 (Beagle) that had been expected to be on the Senate floor last Wednesday afternoon instead remains in the Senate Ways and Means Committee as members work to avoid further problems while correcting an unintended consequence from the budget bill provisions.

GOVERNOR

The governor's office announced that Col. Chip Tansill (U.S. Army, Ret.) took over as director of the Department of Veterans Services effective immediately. He succeeded Col. Tim Gorrell, who submitted his resignation on Monday, Sept. 14; it was effective Friday, Sept. 18. Gorrell had been director of the department since Nov. 1, 2013.

HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

Ohio saw more drug overdose deaths in 2014, statistics released by the Ohio Department of Health (ODH) indicated, mainly because of a major increase in fentanyl. Fentanyl, which ODH said is a lethal opiate that is 30 to 50 times more potent than heroin, contributed to 502 drug overdose deaths in 2014, compared to 84 in 2013. Overall, the number of drug overdose deaths went from 2,110 in 2013 to 2,482 in 2014.

HOUSING

The Ohio Housing Finance Agency (OHFA) Board recently approved more than \$11.6 million for affordable housing initiatives across the state of Ohio.

JUDICIAL

A divided Supreme Court of Ohio ruled that a Cleveland-area sewer district has the power to assess regional storm water fees in an area covering 60 cities, villages and townships in four counties.

PUBLIC SAFETY

A provision in HB 64 (R. Smith), the biennial budget, changed the way organizations can procure their own license plates, cutting the minimum requirement from 500 signatures to 150 signatures. Under current law, organizations needed to obtain at least 500 signatures from motorists who intend to purchase a license plate for the organization. Effective, Tuesday, Sept. 29, the requirement drops to 150.

WORKERS' COMPENSATION

The Ohio Bureau of Workers' Compensation's (BWC) Board of Directors formally approved another 9 percent rate cut for public employers and reviewed new provider and hospital inpatient fee schedules expected to save BWC more than \$2 million in 2016.

LEGISLATIVE ACTIVITY

SENATE:

PASSED BY SENATE

HB11 DOMESTIC RELATIONS DIVISION (Rep. Andrew Brenner, Rep. Margaret Ann Ruhl) To create a domestic relations division of the Delaware County Court of Common Pleas and to create a judgeship for that division.

Amended on floor, Bill Vote 33-0, Emergency Clause Passed 33-0

HB93 BREAST CANCER AWARENESS LICENSE PLATES (Rep. Nan Baker) To specify that "Breast Cancer Awareness" license plates may be issued to motorcycle owners.

Vote 33-0

SB131 HIGHWAY NAME DESIGNATION (Sen. Shannon Jones) To designate a portion of State Route 123 within Warren County as the "Neil Armstrong Memorial Way."

Vote 33-0

SB159 BASEBALL FOR ALL LICENSE PLATE (Sen. Jim Hughes) To create the "Baseball for All" license plate.

Vote 33-0

ADOPTED BY SENATE

SCR9 IRAN NUCLEAR AGREEMENT (Sen. Joe Uecker) To urge the Congress of the United States to disapprove the Iranian nuclear agreement known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action.

Vote 23-10