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Week in Review

January 4, 2019

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.

BALLOT ISSUES

Those seeking to put a proposed constitutional amendment before voters will now need nearly 45 percent more signatures to qualify for the ballot after last year's gubernatorial election than in the previous four years, according to updated requirements announced by Secretary of State Jon Husted on Wednesday. Under Ohio law, the total number of valid signatures required for ballot initiatives is set by the total number of votes cast for governor in the most recent gubernatorial election.

BUDGET

As Gov.-elect Mike DeWine prepares to take office and implement his agenda, especially in the realm of children's issues, a new report from former Center for Community Solutions Executive Director John Begala predicts some difficulties thanks to a 2006 law passed by lawmakers to head off a constitutional amendment aimed at constricting state spending. Begala said he wanted to take a look at long-term revenue and spending trends in Ohio, and he found that over the last 30 years, the only areas of state spending that have grown overall are corrections, thanks to a growth in services

under former Gov. George Voinovich, and in Medicaid, with much of that expansion coming through the implementation of the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) in 1998 and the expansion of Medicaid under the Affordable Care Act (ACA) during Gov. John Kasich's tenure.

EDUCATION

Attorney General Mike DeWine's office answered the State Board of Education's request for a formal legal opinion on who is eligible to vote in the upcoming election for the board's president and vice president on Tuesday, Jan. 15. DeWine's office stated in the opinion that appointed board members whose terms expire at year's end, but whose successors have not yet been appointed, are eligible to vote at the board's January organizational meeting. DeWine's opinion also states that newly appointed members whose appointment paperwork has been delivered to the Senate clerk, but whose appointment has not yet been confirmed by a vote of the Senate, also are eligible to vote, so long as they meet other qualifications for board service.

Gov. John Kasich replaced four members of the State Board of Education with new appointees Wednesday, filling the seats of term-limited veterans Tess Elshoff and Joe Farmer and declining to reappoint members Kara Morgan and Cathye Flory. Newly appointed members include David Brinegar of Fayette, Cindy Collins of Amanda, Mark Lamoncha of Leetonia and Michael Toal of Sidney.

Auditor Dave Yost's office got access over the holidays to more student activity logs from the defunct Electronic Classroom of Tomorrow (ECOT), after a county judge gave him permission to review some of the data the auditor subpoenaed last year.

GAMING/GAMBLING

The Ohio Casino Control Commission (OCCC) released the first draft of its proposed administrative rules package for fantasy sports contests on Wednesday. Gov. John Kasich signed HB 132 (Dever-McColley) clarifying the contests' legality and granting the OCCC authority over the industry.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY/STATEHOUSE

The House released its first half schedule for 2019, following earlier release of the Senate schedule. Both chambers set opening sessions for the afternoon of Monday, Jan. 7.

GOVERNOR

Appointments made during the week include the following:

- Edward J. Miller of Mount Vernon (Knox County) to the Underground Technical Committee for a term beginning Jan. 1, 2019, and ending Dec. 31, 2022.
- Cynthia L. Emerick-Whitson of Camden (Preble County), Lamond H. Jasper Jr. of Sandusky (Erie County), and Donald P. Woodward of Geneva-on-the-Lake (Ashtabula County) reappointed to the Advisory Board on Amusement Ride Safety for terms beginning Jan. 3, 2019, and ending Jan. 1, 2025.

- Jacqueline Gamblin of Englewood (Montgomery County) to the Central State University Board of Trustees for a term beginning Jan. 3, 2019, and ending June 30, 2019.

HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

A study committee formed to examine the feasibility of moving long-term care services into managed care issued its report Friday, billing it as a guide for policymakers weighing the issue. The report does not include a firm recommendation on whether to take the step of moving the services under managed care, as forecast by co-chairs Sen. Dave Burke (R-Marysville) and Rep. Mark Romanchuk (R-Mansfield) at the final meeting of the Managed Long-Term Services and Supports Study Committee.

Since 2008, the percentage of children without health insurance has decreased every year in Ohio and across the nation until 2017, the first year the nation's share of uninsured children increased since yearly data were first collected. From 2008 to 2016, the percentage of uninsured children decreased from 9.7 percent to 4.7 percent; however, from 2016 to 2017, that number increased to 5.0 percent.

JUDICIAL

Attorney Raymond C. Headen, once general counsel for the state treasurer's office, will join the Eighth District Court of Appeals next year as Gov. John Kasich's appointed successor to Ohio Supreme Court Justice-elect Melody Stewart. Kasich announced the appointment Friday.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

A task force led by researchers at the Byrd Polar and Climate Research Center (BPCRC) at Ohio State University (OSU) has released its final list of 43 recommended actions to help Central Ohio prepare for climate change. The "Columbus Climate Adaptation Plan "will soon be presented to Columbus City Council and Mayor Andrew Ginther, according to a release from OSU.

MARIJUANA

After accepting patient registrations for four weeks, the Ohio Medical Marijuana Control Program has registered a total of 4,964 patients, according to the Ohio Board of Pharmacy (OBP).

The only facility currently certified by the state to test medical marijuana will not be ready to analyze cannabis for release to patients until Monday, Feb. 4, North Coast Testing Laboratories (NCTL) spokesperson Joe Moorhead told Hannah News on Thursday.

PUBLIC SAFETY

There were 11 fatalities on Ohio roadways during the New Year's Day holiday weekend, the Ohio State Highway Patrol (OSHP) announced Wednesday. Six fatalities were the result of not wearing a seat belt when available and four were OVI-related, OSHP said in a news release. The five-day reporting period began at midnight Friday, Dec. 28, 2018 and ran through 11:59 p.m. on Tuesday, Jan. 1, 2019. This number is higher than the four-day reporting period last year, when six fatalities were reported.

TOBACCO/SMOKING

A recent Ohio Health Issues Poll conducted by Cincinnati-based nonprofit Interact for Health found that 54 percent of Ohioans support raising the minimum sale age for tobacco to 21, including 55 percent of Republicans and 56 percent of Democrats.

TRANSITION

Attorney General-elect Dave Yost announced additional senior staff appointments, including Delaware County Prosecutor Carol O'Brien as deputy attorney general for law enforcement; Ben Flowers as state solicitor; Carrie Bartunek as director of external affairs and senior policy adviser; Mark Edwards as chief information officer; and Meredith Rockwell as chief of human resources and labor counsel.

Gov.-elect Mike DeWine announced more cabinet and staff appointments Thursday, including Matthew Damschroder as director of the Ohio Department of Administrative Services; Annette Chambers-Smith as director of the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction; Lydia Mihalik as director of the Development Services Agency; former Rep. Jeff McClain as tax commissioner; Kevin Miller as director of Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities, continuing his role from the Kasich administration; Ryan Burgess as director of cabinet affairs; Michael Hall as policy director; and Dan McCarthy as director of legislative affairs.

Secretary of State Frank LaRose announced senior staff hires Thursday, including Monique Cox-Moore as director of community engagement and initiatives; Brandi Seskes as senior elections counsel; Spencer Wood as chief information officer; Chris Olivet as director of legislative affairs.

TRANSPORTATION/INFRASTRUCTURE

Beginning in January 2019, the Bureau of Motor Vehicles (BMV), in collaboration with county clerk of courts title offices, will implement a new Ohio Certificate of Title. In addition to a change in size, the appearance of the front and back of the title has been modified to better accommodate new fields and security features, as well as provide more clarity to the user.

UTILITIES

Ending a legal debate that has hamstrung two of the state's major wind farm projects, the Supreme Court of Ohio has rebuffed the Ohio Power Siting Board (OPSB) by ruling that its members may not vote to extend a wind developer's permit without subjecting the certificate to the board's full amendment process. The decision could mire existing projects in stricter property setback rules on wind turbines.

The Ohio Consumers' Counsel (OCC) is drawing support this week from a wide range of energy stakeholders including the Ohio Manufacturers' Association (OMA) and Ohio Coal Association in testimony urging the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio (PUCO) to reject American Electric Power (AEP) of Ohio's request for a regulated subsidy supporting 900 megawatts of proposed renewable energy.

The Public Utilities Commission of Ohio (PUCO) on Thursday approved the merger of Northeast Ohio Natural Gas Corporation (NEO), Brainard Gas Corporation, Orwell Natural Gas Company and Spelman Pipeline Holdings, which will now operate as NEO.

WORKERS' COMPENSATION

The Ohio Bureau of Workers' Compensation (BWC) announced Friday grant recipients for October and November from its Firefighter Exposure to Environmental Elements Grant Program, which assists with the purchase of safety gear, exhaust systems and specialized washing machines to address residue that collects on gear and can cause respiratory disease, cancer and other ailments. A total of 64 fire departments will share in the \$693,000 worth of grants.

Employers in 31 counties will share \$945,000 in Ohio Bureau of Workers' Compensation (BWC) grants to purchase equipment meant to substantially reduce or eliminate workplace injuries and illnesses.

LEGISLATIVE ACTIVITY:

Both the House and Senate Adjourned Sine Die this week.