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Week in Review
Monday, January 18, 2016

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.

AGRICULTURE

The Ohio Farm Bureau Federation (OFBF) announced that Korre Boyer of Lucas has been named director of public policy. Boyer's most recent position was with the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR), where he served as manager of Malabar Farm State Park and Mohican State Park and oversaw the state parks' wastewater treatment plants. Previously he was an OFBF organization director in Crawford, Marion, Morrow and Richland counties and a vocational ag teacher for the Lucas Local School District.

CORRECTIONS

Executive Director Joanna Saul of the Correctional Institution Inspection Committee (CIIC) commended the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction (DRC) and its director, Gary

Mohr, during an informal year-end review of 2015, when committee staff conducted 19 prison inspections across the state. Saul said poorly run correctional facilities in the previous biennium are performing “significantly better” in 2015-16.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE

The Ohio Criminal Justice Recodification Committee (OCJRC) voted to send recommendations on three criminal code chapters to the Legislative Service Commission (LSC) during its meeting Thursday. LSC will now review the committee's proposed revisions and prepare draft language on the following chapters of the Ohio Revised Code: 2909 (Arson and Related Offenses), 2911 (Robbery, Burglary, Trespass and Safecracking) and 2927 (Miscellaneous Offenses).

EDUCATION

The Ohio Department of Education released the first of two batches of report card data for local districts, as part of a delayed report card rollout for 2014-2015 tied to the switch to new assessments. Last week’s release includes K-3 literacy improvement, how well districts prepare students for college and careers, and graduation rates. Lawmakers have enacted a safe-harbor statute to protect schools from most sanctions tied to grades, however. As part of that safe-harbor provision, grades on individual measures will not be distilled into component or composite grades for the A-F report card.

The State Board of Education's Capacity Committee approved rule updates to reflect statutory changes and the recommendations of an outside panel on changing Ohio's system for evaluating charter school sponsors. The committee voted in favor of a new rule for measuring sponsors' compliance with laws and regulations, as well as their monitoring of compliance by schools under their purview.

ELECTIONS

Secretary of State Jon Husted announced that his office will be launching a new effort to help Ohio's boards of elections recruit new poll workers for the upcoming primary and general elections. Speaking to the Ohio Association of Election Officials' (OAEO) annual meeting, Husted said his office will begin a recruitment effort titled "A Day for Democracy" that will include outreach to Ohio businesses, nonprofits, coordinated media events, public service announcements, as well as other initiatives to get more Ohioans to serve as poll workers.

ELECTIONS 2016

The Republican State Central and Executive Committee of Ohio endorsed Gov. John Kasich for president of the United States by a vote of 44-9. The move, however, was criticized by Ohio Citizens PAC President Tom Zawistowski, who said the actions "prove" there is "no Republican Party in Ohio ... only the Kasich machine."

Official support for Gov. John Kasich's presidential bid grew over the weekend with the endorsement of U.S. Sen. Rob Portman (R-OH).

EMPLOYMENT/UNEMPLOYMENT

The national unemployment rate was at 5 percent in December and the nation added 292,000 jobs, according to numbers released by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), with gains coming in professional and business services, construction, health care, food services and drinking places. According to the BLS, the number of unemployed persons remained nearly unchanged at 7.9 million, falling only by 20,000. The number of long-term unemployed also was essentially unchanged at 2.1 million in December, and accounted for 26.3 percent of the unemployment.

Consideration of legislation reforming the state's unemployment compensation system continued in the House Insurance Committee last Tuesday, with the bill sponsor offering a number of revisions that will be considered for inclusion in a forthcoming substitute bill. Among the HB 394 amendments suggested by Rep. Barbara Sears (R-Sylvania) were proposals affecting Social Security offset requirements, the construction industry, "just cause" disqualification and drug testing.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY/STATEHOUSE

The Capitol Square Review and Advisory Board (CSRAB) announced that it has closed Ohio Statehouse ID card entrance and exit access to the southeast Atrium door and the Ohio State Highway Patrol Post 97 connector doors. These doors are now "Emergency Only" exits. Additionally, a new designated smoking area has been established at the west and east ends of the State Street portico. All prior designated smoking areas have been eliminated on Capitol Square.

GOVERNOR

The governor made the following appointments during the week:

- Napoleon A. Bell II of Columbus (Franklin County) reappointed to the Ohio Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday Commission for a term beginning Jan. 8, 2016, and ending Dec. 31, 2018.
- John A. Pezzino of Waterville (Lucas County) reappointed to the Ohio Private Investigation and Security Services Commission for a term beginning Jan. 8, 2016, and ending Dec. 31, 2020.
- Jennifer G. Fenderbosch of Avon Lake (Lorain County) to the Materials Management Advisory Council for a term beginning Jan. 8, 2016, and ending July 1, 2017.
- Mark K. Papke of Parma Heights (Cuyahoga County) to the Environmental Education Council for a term beginning Jan. 11, 2016 and ending Oct. 1, 2017.
- Rev. Lorenzo Norris of Cleveland Heights (Cuyahoga County) reappointed to the Ohio Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday Commission for a term beginning Jan. 12, 2016, and ending Dec. 30, 2018.
- Jeffrey N. Wagner of Baltimore (Fairfield County) reappointed to the Ohio Board of Motor Vehicle Repair for a term beginning Jan. 12, 2016, and ending Jan. 1, 2019.
- Rodney C. Armstrong of Grove City (Franklin County) reappointed to the Ohio Private Investigation and Security Services Commission for a term beginning Jan. 14, 2016, and ending Dec. 31, 2020.
- Francis J. Szollosi of Toledo (Lucas County) to the Materials Management Advisory Council for a term beginning Jan. 14, 2016, and ending July 1, 2018.

- Kenya Y. Watts of Gahanna (Franklin County) and James B. Redmond of Upper Arlington (Franklin County) to the Accountancy Board for terms beginning Jan. 14, 2016, and ending Oct. 20, 2022.

MARIJUANA

Groups representing medical, law enforcement, business and other interests will consider medical marijuana in the next several weeks as part of a House task force that also involves key backers of the failed Issue 3 marijuana legalization campaign. A separate series of Senate forums is expected to be announced next week. House Speaker Cliff Rosenberger (R-Clarksville) announced the 15-member group which will be led by Rep. Kirk Schuring (R-Canton). Aside from Schuring and Reps. Dan Ramos (D-Lorain) and Stephen Huffman (R-Tipp City), all other members will come from outside the General Assembly, including Larry Moliterno on behalf of the Ohio Alliance of Recovery Providers.

PEOPLE

Ron Graff Jr., chairman of the Board of Directors of the Ohio Grocers Association (OGA), announced the selection of Kristin Mullins as the group's new president and CEO.

Ohio Department of Commerce Director Jacqueline Williams announced the appointment of Rachael Carl as the new legislative liaison for the department. Carl has been serving as interim legislative liaison since November.

STATE GOVERNMENT

The seventh annual Human Trafficking Awareness Day at the Ohio Statehouse brought together state government leaders and advocates around ending a crime that exploits an estimated 1,100 children in the state.

UTILITIES

Supporters of a competitive electric market said the power purchase agreements (PPA) favored by incumbent utilities and scorned as "re-regulation" by numerous stakeholders will distort energy prices not only in Ohio but also in the larger, 13-state region of PJM Interconnection, which has sought to intervene in the FirstEnergy case scheduled this week for the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio (PUCO).

The Public Utilities Commission of Ohio (PUCO) reopened the sub-metering complaint against Nationwide Energy Partners (NEP) in a mixed ruling last Wednesday and approved a small increase in Vectren Energy Delivery of Ohio's wholesale natural gas price, with PUCO Chairman Andre Porter missing both votes. The commission also certified the Ohio Schools Council as a regional gas aggregator available to customers looking to opt out of Vectren and other gas providers' standard choice offer (SCO).

LEGISLATIVE ACTIVITY

No legislative activity to report.