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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

Ohio is taking a lead role in a 35-state lawsuit against makers of the opioid treatment drug Suboxone, accusing Indivior PLC of conspiring to maintain a monopoly to prevent cheaper generics from entering the market. State attorneys general say Indivior, formerly Reckitt Benckiser Pharmaceuticals, violated state and federal anti-trust laws by colluding with MonoSol Rx to switch Suboxone from a tablet version to a sublingual film to prevent or delay the availability of competing generics.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE

The special panel overhauling Ohio's criminal code released some 4,000 pages of draft legislation with final committee amendments due by Friday, Oct. 21. The Criminal Justice Recodification

Committee convened in May 2015 with the task of reviewing the entire Ohio Criminal Code for substantive and technical changes. Originally due to report on Aug. 1, the committee extended its deadline to November at the urging of Senate President Keith Faber (R-Celina), voting earlier this month to forward drug statutes to the Legislative Service Commission for consideration in the lame duck session.

ECONOMY

Ohio's hourly minimum wage will increase 5 cents at the start of 2017 to \$8.15, the Ohio Department of Commerce said last week. For tipped employees, the wage will increase 3 cents to \$4.08 per hour. Ohio's minimum wage increases annually in line with the Consumer Price Index for urban wage earners and clerical workers (CPI-W), as a result of a constitutional amendment state voters approved in 2006.

EDUCATION

The Senate Education Committee previewed likely changes last week for a House-passed truancy reform bill now pending before the panel, including a proposed ban on suspending or expelling the youngest students. Meanwhile, school management groups said they're on board with the spirit of the bill's truancy proposals but can't yet be official proponents because of lingering concerns.

ELECTIONS 2016

Quinnipiac University released a new poll showing Democrat Hillary Clinton and Republican Donald Trump in a dead heat for president. The poll shows Clinton with 44 percent of likely voters and Trump with 43 percent, with 8 percent for Libertarian Party candidate Gary Johnson and 2 percent for Green Party candidate Jill Stein. Clinton held a 41 to 39 percent lead among likely voters in a Sept. 14 survey by Quinnipiac.

Secretary of State Jon Husted said nearly 806,000 Ohio voters have requested an absentee ballot ahead of the November election.

GAMING

Websites that offer "daily fantasy" games for professional sports will fall under the oversight of the Ohio Casino Control Commission, as would local gambling pools such as "Queen of Hearts" games, under SB 356 which was introduced last Monday by Sen. Bill Coley (R-West Chester).

A new report prepared by gaming consultant Spectrum for the Ohio Department of Administrative Services recommends that the Ohio Lottery be reconfigured into a quasi-public corporation, similar to lotteries in Georgia and Connecticut, a recommendation previously made by the Ohio auditor's office in 2010. Under the proposed restructuring, the executive and legislative branches would still

have approvals of key appointments and budgets, but the agency would have more flexibility in areas ranging from procurement to hiring, and would have some exemptions to administrative rule making requirements that are imposed on other state agencies.

A Franklin County judge last week dismissed the last remaining challenge to casino gambling, ruling that the state has a rational basis for implementing casino restrictions and regulations and that an individual does not have a fundamental right to create his own gambling venue.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY/STATEHOUSE

The Senate passed legislation mainly along party lines Wednesday that would require state agencies to prove their worth to the General Assembly and if they do not, the agency will automatically sunset. SB 329 (Jordan-Faber) was introduced by Senate President Keith Faber (R-Celina) and Sen. Kris Jordan (R-Powell) in May and received three hearings, including two last week, before it was reported out of the Senate Government Oversight and Reform Committee and passed on the Senate floor.

GOVERNOR

The governor made the following appointments during the week:

- Timothy J. Bechtold of Columbus (Franklin County) to the State Board of Pharmacy for a term beginning Sept. 23, 2016, and ending June 30, 2020.
- Christopher J. Allwein of Columbus (Franklin County) to the Public Benefits Advisory Board for a term beginning Sept. 23, 2016, and ending June 30, 2019.
- Curtis L. Passafume, Jr., R.Ph. (Chair) of Hilliard (Franklin County), Stephanie M. Abel, Pharm.D. of Dublin (Franklin County), Tony E. Coder, Jr. of Mount Gilead (Morrow County), Michael G. Hirsch of Chillicothe (Ross County), Dr. Jerry W. Mitchell, Jr. of Powell (Delaware County), Dr. Amol Sooin of Xenia (Greene County), Michael E. Stanek of Avon Lake (Lorain County), and Gary L. Wenk, Ph.D. of Columbus (Franklin County) to the Medical Marijuana Advisory Committee for terms beginning Sept. 23, 2016, and continuing at the pleasure of the governor.
- Ferzan M. Ahmed of Powell (Delaware County) reappointed to the State Board of Registration for Professional Engineers and Surveyors for a term beginning Sept. 26, 2016, and ending Sept. 24, 2021.
- William R. Kilimnik of Liberty Twp. (Butler County) and Daniel P. Sullivan of Columbus (Franklin County) reappointed to the TourismOhio Advisory Board for terms beginning Sept. 28, 2016, and ending Sept. 27, 2019.

HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

After a summer's work on infant mortality legislation aimed at implementing the recommendations of the state commission on the topic, the Senate Health and Human Services Committee accepted a

substitute version of SB 332 (Jones-Tavares) last Tuesday, moving it on to the full chamber where it was approved.

HOUSING

Home sales fell slightly in August, according to the Ohio Association of Realtors, coming in 1.4 percent behind the same month last year and 2.1 percent below July's figures.

Champions for affordable housing hosted a press call last Wednesday to highlight issues they see with federal moves to eliminate mortgage giants Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac because of the effect that could have on homeownership. Rob Randhava, senior counsel with The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, said homeownership is the way in which families can build wealth, but "with really high credit standards, and low savings, and with this shift in the market toward rental housing, too many families remain shut out."

MARIJUANA

Gov. John Kasich announced his eight appointments to the Medical Marijuana Advisory Committee. They include pharmacists Stephanie Abel, a clinical specialty pharmacist in palliative medicine at Ohio State University's James Cancer Hospital and Ohio Board of Pharmacy member Curtis Passafume, vice president for pharmacy services at OhioHealth; physicians Dr. Jerry Mitchell, who works at Zangmeister Cancer Center and Ohio State Medical Board member Dr. Amol Soin, chairman and medical director of Ohio Pain Clinic; full-time farmer Michael Hirsch; Gary Wenk, director of the neuroscience undergraduate major program in the psychology department at Ohio State University; Michael Stanek, vice president and chief financial officer of Hunt Imaging; and Tony Coder, assistant director at the Drug Free Action Alliance.

Senate President Keith Faber (R-Celina) made the following appointments to the Medical Marijuana Advisory Committee: Martin McCarthy of Cuyahoga County will serve on the committee representing caregivers, while Shelby County Sheriff John Lenhart will be the voice of law enforcement.

PEOPLE

Lt. Governor Mary Taylor announced the recent appointment of Mehek Cooke as chief of staff. Cooke had been serving on the political team for Kasich for America. Taylor also named Chris Brock as director of stakeholder and media engagement for the Ohio Department of Insurance, where she serves as director.

UTILITIES

The Senate Public Utilities Committee put its imprimatur on the governor's four-month-old appointment of Public Utilities Commission of Ohio (PUCO) Chairman Asim Haque, granting him unanimous support. Last Wednesday, the full Senate voted unanimously to confirm Haque as PUCO chair.

LEGISLATIVE ACTIVITY

Legislators have recessed for the summer.