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Week in Review

October 31, 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.

ADDICTION/SUBSTANCE ABUSE

Ohio Attorney General Mike DeWine and the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) reported the collection of an estimated 14 tons (28,263 pounds) of unneeded, unwanted or expired prescription drugs during the National Prescription Drug Take-Back Day.

The Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (OhioMHAS) recently awarded nine counties funding to help prevent underage drinking and reduce prescription drug misuse among youth and young adults. Champaign, Coshocton, Hardin, Holmes, Mercer, Seneca, Tuscarawas, Warren and Wayne counties each received \$80,000 to implement Ohio's Strategic Prevention Framework-Partnership for Success (SPF-PFS) initiative.

ATTORNEY GENERAL

Ohio will join a \$41.2 million settlement with carmakers Hyundai and Kia over claims they misstated fuel economy ratings for some models in 2011, 2012 and 2013. The Ohio Attorney General's Office says the agreement among 33 states, the District of Columbia, Hyundai Motor Company, Hyundai Motor America, Kia Motors Corporation and Kia Motors America ends a probe of inflated miles-per-gallon (MPG) estimates in a time of "especially high" gas prices exceeding \$4 per gallon in Ohio.

EDUCATION

As the Ohio Department of Education goes through litigation seeking the log-in data from the Electronic Classroom of Tomorrow (ECOT), Ohio Democrats held a press teleconference demanding legislative Republicans return campaign contributions from ECOT's founder, Bill Lager. An ECOT spokesman responded by noting previous Lager contributions to Democrats.

Senate Minority Leader Joe Schiavoni (D-Boardman) said Wednesday he's prepared a substitute bill for his online charter school regulation measure, while Rep. Michele Lepore-Hagan (D-Youngstown) announced plans to introduce a House companion. Schiavoni's SB 298 would codify using log-in duration data for enrollment counts, a method the Ohio Department of Education used for 2015-2016 counts, sparking appeals from several e-schools and a lawsuit from the largest, Electronic Classroom of Tomorrow.

ELECTIONS

Planning to take a selfie with your ballot after filling it out on or before Election Day so that you can post it on your favorite social media website? You could be violating Ohio law, but two lawmakers want to change that. Reps. Niraj Antani (R-Miamisburg) and Mike Duffey (R-Worthington) introduced HB 609, a bill that would decriminalize the posting of marked ballots on social media websites such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

ELECTIONS 2016

Republican U.S. Sen. Rob Portman and former Democratic Gov. Ted Strickland, in their final debate in Ohio's 2016 U.S. Senate race, continued the pattern of earlier debates by attacking one another's records while staking out ground as the candidate of everyday people. Portman repeatedly characterized himself as a results-driven "independent voice" for Ohioans, while Strickland said his hardscrabble upbringing gives him the right perspective to advocate for working people.

Secretary of State Jon Husted gave an update on the number of absentee ballots requested for the 2016 presidential election, saying that as of Friday, Oct. 21, an estimated 1,424,916 absentee ballots had been requested statewide. Of the absentee ballots requested, 21,310 are from military and overseas voters, with 6,065 cast. Voting for military and overseas voters began on Sept. 24, while all other voters could begin voting absentee on Oct. 12.

EMPLOYMENT/UNEMPLOYMENT

Ohio dropped 3,100 jobs in September and the unemployment rate ticked up to 4.8 percent, the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) announced. It was 4.7 percent in August.

According to ODJFS, the number of workers unemployed in the state in September was 275,000, up 4,000 from 271,000 in August. The number of unemployed in the state has increased by 12,000 over the past year, and was 263,000 in September 2015, when the unemployment rate was 4.6 percent.

ENERGY

Two of the nation's leading environmental groups say a smaller rollback of renewable energy and energy efficiency standards than the one imposed by "freeze" bill 130-SB310 (Balderson) could create as many as 136,000 new jobs in Ohio and add \$10.7 billion to the state's gross domestic product (GDP) by 2030. Commissioned by the Nature Conservancy and Environmental Defense Fund (EDF) and produced by the Greenlink Group, the report "Grounds for Optimism: Options for Empowering Ohio's Energy Market," offers four scenarios for the state's clean energy landscape during the portfolio schedule created by energy omnibus 127-SB221 and modified by SB 310, whose two-year freeze of energy efficiency (EE) and renewable standards is due to expire at the end of December.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY/STATEHOUSE

The Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee will focus on moving two pieces of legislation during the lame-duck session, according to Chairman Troy Balderson (R-Zanesville). The senator said he would like to move water quality mid-biennium review (MBR) measure SB 333 (Hite) and renewable energy standards bill SB 320 (Seitz) before the end of the year.

GOVERNOR

The governor made the following appointments during the week:

- William J. Burke of Bellbrook (Greene County) reappointed to the Credit Union Council for a term beginning Oct. 21, 2016, and ending Sept. 22, 2019.
- Timothy P. Galvin, Sr. of Grandview Heights (Franklin County) and Gerald O. Holland of Cuyahoga Falls (Summit County) reappointed to the Board of Building Standards for terms beginning Oct. 21, 2016, and ending Oct. 13, 2020.
- Frederick D. Benton Jr. of Columbus (Franklin County) to the Ohio Criminal Sentencing Commission for a term beginning Oct. 21, 2016, and ending Aug. 21, 2017.
- Gregory A. Guzman of Maumee (Lucas County) and Daniel A. Molina of Loveland (Clermont County) reappointed to the Commission on Hispanic-Latino Affairs for terms beginning Oct. 24, 2016, and ending Oct. 7, 2019.
- Timothy W. Burga of Westerville (Franklin County) and Andrew E. Doehrel of Galena (Delaware County) reappointed to the Industrial Commission Nominating Council for terms beginning Oct. 26, 2016, and ending Oct. 20, 2020.
- Robert K. Schmitz of Bexley (Franklin County) reappointed to the Industrial Commission Nominating Council for a term beginning Oct. 26, 2016, and ending Oct. 20, 2018.
- Sherri D. Orr of Gahanna (Franklin County) reappointed to the State Auctioneers Commission for a term beginning Oct. 26, 2016, and ending Oct. 9, 2019.

HOUSING

September home sales were up from last year's figures and August's performance as well, according to the Ohio Association of Realtors (OAR). Sales of 151,000 houses marked a 3.8 percent increase from September 2015's 145,636 sales, and a 5.1 percent increase from 143,714 sales in August of this year. Third quarter sales were 1.5 percent higher than figures for the same period last year.

JUDICIAL

The Ohio Supreme Court declared that the General Assembly has the power to limit Ohioans' constitutional right to redress through statutes of repose, while the lone dissenting opinion said the majority was only helping legislators to further curtail the common law protections of the "despised proletariat." The Court ruled 5-1 to uphold Ohio's four-year statute of repose on most medical malpractice suits. Chief Justice Maureen O'Connor emphasized that unlike a statute of limitations, which commences only when the complainant recognizes or should have recognized the injury, a statute of repose must only provide a "reasonable" period in which to sue, notwithstanding actual knowledge of the injury.

STATE GOVERNMENT

Matthew LaMantia has been named deputy chief of the Office of Community Development in the Ohio Development Services Agency's (DSA) Community Services Division. He will oversee programs and services in the office that help local communities improve downtown business districts, local infrastructure, affordable housing stock, and services to the homeless.

TRANSPORTATION

Lawmakers should make drastic changes to transportation policy in order to effectively address climate change, according to a new report from Frontier Group and Environment Ohio. The report, "50 Steps toward Carbon-Free Transportation: Rethinking U.S. Transportation Policy to Fight Global Warming," says the transportation system is America's largest source of carbon pollution, with the country creating more than any other major industrialized nation.

LEGISLATIVE ACTIVITY:

No legislative activity to report at this time as legislators are on summer recess.