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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**

The Ohio Attorney General's Office announced Wednesday that eight counties hit hard by the opioid epidemic have been chosen to participate in a \$1 million family-finding and foster family recruitment program announced by the agency in August.

Rep. Scott Wiggam (R-Wooster) Thursday said he was introducing legislation that would increase penalties for drug trafficking in Ohio.

**AGING**

Gov. John Kasich Monday announced the appointment of state Long-Term Care Ombudsman Beverley Laubert as the acting director of the Ohio Department of Aging (ODA). She replaces Stephanie Loucka, who is leaving at year's end.

## **FY19-20 CAPITAL BUDGET**

After two previous rounds where Gov. John Kasich convened a panel of higher education leaders to pare down capital requests from institutions, the administration has changed things up for the upcoming capital budget. Instead of using a higher education funding commission, Cleveland State President Ron Berkman is working with four-year institutions on a list of their needs, while Stark State President Para Jones is working with the community colleges. According to the Ohio Department of Higher Education (ODHE), both presidents are asking their colleagues for input and are narrowing the list of requested projects to those that align closest with the principles given to them by the administration.

The Greater Cleveland Partnership (GCP) submitted the list of its capital budget priorities to the Legislature this week, recommending financing for 14 projects it called "high-impact" in the upcoming capital bill. "GCP has been in the midst of a strategic planning process that culminates at the end of this year," said Joe Roman, GCP's president and CEO. "All of the projects on this list represent important economic development efforts in our region and deserve priority status, however our Tier I recommendations reflect Places with Impact -- an emerging priority in our strategic plan."

## **CHILDREN/FAMILIES**

The Health Policy Institute of Ohio (HPIO) recently released its third policy brief in its series titled "Connections between Education and Health" that focuses on intersections between early childhood education and health outcomes. According to the institute, a high-quality early childhood education can lay the groundwork for increased educational outcomes through adulthood that correlate with increased health outcomes.

## **CORRECTIONS**

The Controlling Board Monday approved a request by the Ohio Department of Youth Services (DYS) and the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction (DRC) to combine their central office headquarters into one location, though lawmakers were concerned about the increased cost of such a move.

## **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

The Ohio Development Services Agency (DSA) awarded \$28,370,452 in Ohio Historic Preservation Tax Credits to rehabilitate 22 historic buildings in 11 communities, the agency announced Tuesday.

## **EDUCATION**

Ohio high school students can now earn recognition by showing they are prepared to contribute to the workplace and their communities. The OhioMeansJobs-Readiness Seal is a formal designation students can earn on their high school diplomas and transcripts indicating they have the personal strengths, strong work ethic and professional experience that businesses need.

Career-technical education officials told a state advisory group Wednesday that the Ohio Department of Education's (ODE) data system is error-prone, not user friendly, and does not provide timely access to information. Department officials said a pending overhaul of the system should resolve many issues flagged Wednesday.

## **ELECTIONS**

The Senate will likely seek to provide more funding for voting machines in the 2018 capital budget, Senate President Larry Obhof (R-Medina) told *Hannah News* on Monday. "We're planning on addressing it, at least in part, during the capital budget process," Obhof said after presiding over the non-voting session, responding to a question on Secretary of State Jon Husted's request for the General Assembly to provide approximately \$118 million to upgrade the state's systems.

## **ELECTIONS 2018**

Among a collection of lawmakers looking to switch from one chamber to the other are Rep. Kirk Schuring (R-Canton) and Sen. Scott Oeslager (R-North Canton), who've traded their Stark County seats twice before.

Former Rep. Greg Jolivette said Monday he is running for the 51st House District in 2018, the *Hamilton Journal News* reported. The seat is currently held by Rep. Wes Rethford (R-Hamilton), who is eligible to run for re-election. He challenged Rethford in 2014, but lost in the primary.

Rep. Teresa Fedor (D-Toledo) announced Tuesday that she intends to run for the 11th Senate District in 2018. The seat is currently held by Sen. Edna Brown (D-Toledo). Fedor is also term-limited in the House. She previously held the Senate seat before she was term-limited and ran for the House.

Sen. Bill Beagle (R-Tipp City) said Tuesday he will run for Miami County commissioner in 2018. Beagle is term limited next year. In a statement released to the media, he said he is a three-year resident of the county and a local business owner, and he said he wants to continue to make the area a "great place for us to work and raise our families."

Rep. Nathan Manning (R-North Ridgeville) announced earlier this month that he will run for the Ohio Senate's 13th District in 2018. The seat is currently held by his mother, Sen. Gayle Manning (R-North Ridgeville), who is term limited.

Former Franklin County Sheriff Zach Scott made his bid for Congress official on Thursday, announcing he will run for the seat that U.S. Rep. Pat Tiberi (R-Columbus) will resign from next month. Scott, a Democrat, noted his law enforcement experience that includes three decades as a homicide detective, sergeant, SWAT officer and Franklin County Sheriff.

Michael Canty, president and CEO of Alloy Bellow and Precision Welding, said he has officially filed paperwork to run for the 6th Ohio House District in 2018. The seat is currently held by Rep. Marlene Anielski (R-Walton Hills), who is term-limited. Canty, a Republican, had told fellow members of the Small Business Advisory Council in November that he would run for the seat.

The following endorsements were made over the week:

- The gubernatorial campaign of Connie Pillich announced the endorsement of former Pennsylvania Gov. Ed Rendell.

- The U.S. Senate campaign of Mike Gibbons announced the endorsements of former Ohio Sen. Joy Padgett, who serves as chair of Ohio Women for Trump; Belmont County Republican Party Chairman Christopher Gagin; and Delaware County Commissioner Jeff Benton.

## **ENVIRONMENT**

Ohio EPA has finalized the 2018 Program Management Plan for the Water Pollution Control Loan Fund (WPCLF). The fund provides financial and technical assistance for projects that improve the quality of Ohio's rivers, streams, lakes and other water bodies.

## **GENERAL ASSEMBLY/STATEHOUSE**

The House released names of those applying to fill vacancies in the 81st and 87th House Districts. Speaker Pro Tem Kirk Schuring (R-Canton) will chair the screening panels to vet candidates, with the successful applicants expected to be sworn in Jan. 17, 2018. A total of 15 individuals have applied for the two seats.

## **GOVERNOR**

Gov. John Kasich is seeking to give his final "State of the State" address in his hometown of Westerville. He's seeking General Assembly approval to convene a joint session for the speech on Tuesday, March 6, 2018 at Otterbein University's Fritsche Theatre.

Appointments made during the week include the following:

- Michael M. Waleryszak of Fremont (Sandusky County) to the Terra State Community College Board of Trustees for a term beginning Dec. 19, 2017, and ending Dec. 30, 2022.
- Matthew W. Warnock of Worthington (Franklin County) to the Oil and Gas Leasing Commission for a term beginning Dec. 19, 2017 and ending Sept. 29, 2019.
- Richard Shank of Columbus (Franklin County) to the Oil and Gas Leasing Commission for a term beginning Dec. 19, 2017 and ending Sept. 29, 2020.
- Stephen Buehrer of Powell (Delaware County) to the Oil and Gas Leasing Commission for a term beginning Dec. 19, 2017 and ending Sept. 29, 2021.

## **HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES**

As the open enrollment period for insurance plans on the Affordable Care Act (ACA) exchange came to an end, Ohioans were on track to see higher overall enrollment numbers than in 2016. As of Dec. 9, 109,475 Ohioans had enrolled in a plan on the exchange. The corresponding week six enrollment count in 2016 was 97,462, indicating a 12.3 percent increase. A surge in sign-ups was expected ahead of the Friday, Dec. 15 deadline.

The Ohio Hospital Association reports that the Ohio State Pharmacy Board recently finalized a new rule requiring prescribers to include the first four characters of the medical diagnosis code -- the ICD-10 code -- on all prescriptions for controlled substances. The ICD-10 code will be entered by the pharmacy into Ohio's prescription drug monitoring program, OARRS. Prescriptions received without the ICD-10 code will be reported to the Ohio State Medical Board to investigate the prescriber for non-compliance.

## **HOUSING/HOMELESSNESS**

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development announced it has awarded \$3.3 million to Ohio housing programs to continue helping public housing residents and those participating in the Housing Choice Voucher Program to further their education and find good jobs. The awards came as part of a commemoration of the 25th anniversary of the Family Self-Sufficiency Program.

## **MARIJUANA**

The Ohio Department of Commerce (DOC) received 104 medical marijuana processor applications, the Ohio Medical Marijuana Control Program (MMCP) announced Wednesday. DOC is authorized to award up to 40 provisional licenses for processors.

## **STATE GOVERNMENT**

The practices of the Ohio Department of Administrative Services (DAS) Office of Information Technology (IT) "do not align with procurement processes that support fair and equitable opportunities for qualified state term schedule vendors," according to a new investigation from Inspector General (IG) Randall Meyer's office. Commenting on a DAS IT review from Procurement Integrity Consulting Services LLC (PICS), the IG said, "The lack of effective procurement integrity controls in the analysis threatens the fair, open and honest marketplace in which businesses compete."

## **TAXATION**

Congressional Republicans passed the final version of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act on Wednesday, sending the legislation to President Donald Trump for his signature. HR1 cuts taxes on individuals and businesses to varying degrees, eliminates the Affordable Care Act's penalty for failing to acquire health insurance and allows oil drilling in Alaska's Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. The proof will be "in the paycheck", Sen. Rob Portman (R-OH) said on passage of the federal tax legislation, despite polling showing the legislation is significantly unpopular among the public. U.S. Sen. Sherrod Brown (D-OH) continued to criticize the federal tax cut package during a call-in with reporters, saying it shows that the government has been overtaken by special interest groups. "I've not seen anything as immoral as what Congress did last night," Brown told reporters.

## **TRANSPORTATION**

The Ohio Turnpike and Infrastructure Commission (OTIC) on Monday approved its approximately \$340 million operating budget and nearly \$121 million capital budget for 2018. The commission's capital budget will focus on continuing its Pavement Replacement Program, with two projects taking place in Lorain and Cuyahoga counties.

## **UNIONS**

Rep. John Becker (R-Cincinnati) Monday announced he was introducing six separate constitutional amendments that address right-to-work. He urged the General Assembly to put all on the ballot for Ohioans to vote on individually. They are all co-sponsored by Rep. Craig Riedel (R-Defiance) and are HJR7 through HJR12.

## **WORKERS' COMPENSATION**

The Ohio Bureau of Workers' Compensation (BWC) Tuesday announced the appointment of Dr. Nicholas D. Trego to lead the agency's pharmacy operations. As pharmacy program director, Trego will oversee BWC's pharmacy benefits program, which manages more than 768,000 prescriptions in the BWC system.

The proposed 2 percent transfer of Ohio Bureau of Workers' Compensation (BWC) funds that alarmed stakeholders and forced concessions from the Kasich administration will be history in a "matter of days," BWC Chief Operating Officer Kevin Abrams told the bureau's board of directors Thursday. Budget bill HB49 (Smith) had authorized the 2 percent shift to the General Revenue Fund (GRF) from state agencies including BWC, which unlike some other executive offices is supported by employer premiums in lieu of tax dollars.

### **LEGISLATIVE ACTIVITY:**

*No legislative activity to report.*