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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

Attorney General Mike DeWine released preliminary numbers of drug cases that the Ohio Bureau of Criminal Investigation (BCI) has received to date in 2017, with the number of confirmed carfentanil submissions nearly quadrupling and a 46 percent increase in fentanyl submissions.

At the request of Gov. John Kasich, the Ohio Third Frontier has made available up to \$20 million to advance new technologies in the battle against drug abuse and addiction. Awards totaling \$10 million were approved Friday by the Third Frontier Commission. These projects range from pain management alternatives to new apps that improve diagnosis and treatment.

AGING

At the final meeting of the House Speaker's Task Force on Alzheimer's and Dementia Tuesday, the group heard presentations on efforts different groups are undertaking to assist all of the individuals affected by those with cognitive handicaps, not just those suffering from the diseases. Following the

meeting, Chairwoman Rep. Dorothy Pelanda (R-Marysville) said that the group's next steps will be to continue conversations and produce a final report that could inform potential future legislation.

ARTS, SPORTS AND ENTERTAINMENT

Attorney General Mike DeWine announced he would challenge a potential move by the Columbus Crew SC to Austin, TX after Rep. Mike Duffey (R-Worthington) brought his attention to a state law concerning publicly-funded professional sports teams.

BALLOT ISSUES

The Ballot Board unanimously certified two proposed constitutional amendments as containing only one amendment each on Tuesday, clearing the way for backers to begin collecting signatures. The amendments titled the "Initiative and Referendum Amendment for Counties and Townships" and the "Ohio Community Rights Amendment," were both brought by the Ohio Community Rights Network, who say they want to secure the authority of communities to enact stronger environmental rights and protections than those recognized in state, federal or international law.

FY18-19 BUDGET

Revenues for November met estimates, however slightly, coming in \$8.7 million or 0.5 percent over estimates for the month, according to preliminary figures released Wednesday by the Office of Budget and Management (OBM). For the year-to-date, Ohio is nearly \$29.5 million or 0.3 percent over estimates.

EDUCATION

The Ohio Supreme Court is again rejecting Electronic Classroom of Tomorrow's (ECOT) request to stop the state from clawing back and withholding money in an enrollment dispute. Justices ruled 5-1 Wednesday to deny an emergency request to grant an injunction or expedite ECOT's case that the online charter school filed in October.

Superintendent Paolo DeMaria gave a lengthy critique Wednesday of Sen. Matt Huffman's (R-Lima) education deregulation proposal, listing several concerns with the legislation. DeMaria was one of many witnesses who signed up to testify or provided written comments on the legislation at a Senate Education Committee hearing.

Ohio should simplify its report cards for local schools and make value-added data account for a greater share of schools' ratings, the Fordham Institute recommended in a report released Thursday. The report, "Back to the Basics," is written by Fordham's Ohio research director, Aaron Churchill, who calls for the state to winnow its dozen-plus letter grades down to six -- one overall grade, based on five component grades.

ELECTIONS 2018

Ohio Supreme Court Justice Bill O'Neill waffled on his commitment to drop out of the race for governor if former Ohio Attorney General Richard Cordray entered the race, saying he wanted assurances Cordray would adopt his position of legalizing marijuana and using the revenue for mental health.

Rep. Nickie Antonio (D-Lakewood) announced recently that she will run for the 23rd Senate District in 2018, looking to trade places with Sen. Mike Skindell (D-Lakewood), who has filed paperwork to run for Antonio's seat.

Four Democratic candidates for governor met again Monday night in Cleveland for a debate, commenting on issues similar to those addressed in previous matchups while weighing in on recent developments in the race -- the merger of two GOP gubernatorial campaigns and the entry of Richard Cordray on the Democratic side. Former Rep. Connie Pillich, Sen. Joe Schiavoni (D-Boardman), former U.S. Rep. Betty Sutton and Dayton Mayor Nan Whaley participated in the hour-long debate at the City Club of Cleveland. Ohio Supreme Court Justice Bill O'Neill, who's declared himself a candidate but has yet to file official paperwork, was not invited. Cordray, former Ohio attorney general and treasurer, joined the race Tuesday after recently resigning as head of the federal Consumer Financial Protection Bureau.

Former Ohio Attorney General Richard Cordray became the sixth Democrat to enter the governor's race on Tuesday, announcing at Lilly's Kitchen Table in his hometown of Grove City that he will be focusing "on the kitchen table issues that keep families up at night, like the cost of health care and college, how to find that better job and how to save for retirement."

Sen. Troy Balderson (R-Zanesville) announced Thursday that he would run to replace outgoing U.S. Rep. Pat Tiberi (R-Columbus). "I will fight for our interests, our jobs and for a government that stays out of the way," Balderson wrote on Facebook.

The following endorsements were made over the week:

- Franklin County GOP Central Committee endorsed Mike Gibbons in the U.S. Senate primary.
- Franklin County GOP and Rep. Dorothy Pelanda (R-Marysville) both endorsed the Mike DeWine-Jon Husted joint ticket for governor and lieutenant governor.

FEDERAL

U.S. Sen. Sherrod Brown (D-OH) called on fellow Sen. Al Franken (D-MN) to step down Wednesday amid several sexual misconduct allegations, including a new one earlier that morning. Brown's statement came after a series of female Democratic senators called for Franken's resignation in rapid succession. Franken announced Thursday he would resign in the coming weeks.

GAMING/GAMBLING

Ohio's four casinos earned \$66.4 million in November, up from \$62.2 million in November 2016 and down from \$66.5 million in October, according to new figures released by the Ohio Casino Control Commission Thursday.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY/STATEHOUSE

The Senate released its session schedule for the first half of next year, following a similar announcement from the House. The first Senate session of 2018 is scheduled for Wednesday, Jan 17, though an if-needed session is on the calendar for Wednesday, Jan. 10. Like the House's schedule,

the Senate's calendar foresees an end to definite sessions in May. Everything on the calendar after Wednesday, May 23 is marked "if needed."

Rep. Michael Ashford (D-Toledo) has applied to fill a vacant position in Lucas County and is recommending that outgoing Toledo Mayor Paula Hicks-Hudson be his replacement in the General Assembly. Ashford is applying for the Lucas County treasurer seat vacated by Toledo Mayor-elect Wade Kapszukiewicz and considers Hicks-Hudson to be a qualified candidate for the 44th district.

The House is allowing one more week for changes to an unemployment compensation reform package before bringing it up for a committee vote. House Speaker Cliff Rosenberger (R-Clarksville) said after Tuesday's session the bill will clear committee next week and be brought up for a floor vote in January. Speaker Pro Tem Kirk Schuring (R-Canton) said he wants a little more time to work with interested parties on possible amendments to HB 382, though he said he does not foresee substantial changes to the legislation. He said analysis shows a near-even split in the sacrifices asked of workers versus employers, and he doesn't want to upset that balance.

Senate Minority Leader Kenny Yuko (D-Richmond Heights) appointed Mike Rowe, communications director for the caucus, to serve as chief of staff for the Senate Democrats. Rowe replaces Michael Premo, who resigned last month amid accusations of "inappropriate conduct toward staff." Rowe will begin his new duties on Monday, Dec. 18.

Robert McColley (R-Napoleon) resigned his House seat to take a Senate appointment Tuesday, filling the 1st District vacancy left by former Sen. Cliff Hite's (R-Findlay) resignation for inappropriate conduct toward a Legislative Service Commission staffer. The House elected Rep. Bill Reineke (R-Tiffin) to replace McColley on the leadership team as assistant majority whip.

Senate President Larry Obhof (R-Medina) appointed Sen. Bob Hackett (R-London) as chairman of the Senate Agriculture Committee, in the wake of former Chairman Sen. Cliff Hite's (R-Findlay) resignation for inappropriate conduct.

Rep. Nickie Antonio (D-Lakewood) gave up her leadership position in the House Democratic Caucus Thursday to focus on her run for the Senate in 2018.

GOVERNOR

Appointments made during the week include the following:

- Dr. Thomas Nye of Hamilton (Butler County) reappointed to the State Board of Optometry for a term beginning Dec. 1, 2017, and ending Sept. 24, 2022.
- Kimberly A. Mermis of Columbus (Franklin County) to the State Board of Optometry for a term beginning Dec. 4, 2017, and ending Sept. 24, 2022.
- Mary J. Santiago of Lorain (Lorain County) reappointed to the Commission on Hispanic-Latino Affairs for a term beginning Dec. 4, 2017, and ending Oct. 7, 2020.
- Deminique Heiks of Toledo (Lucas County), Kendra J. Kec of Whitehouse (Lucas County), and Judge David E. Stucki of Brewster (Stark County) reappointed to the Governor's Council on Juvenile Justice for terms beginning Dec. 4, 2017, and ending Oct. 31, 2020.
- Brooke M. Burns-Jackson of Columbus (Franklin County), Magistrate Kathleen Swiger Lenski of Miamisburg (Montgomery County), and Reginald A. Wilkinson of Columbus (Franklin County) to

the Governor's Council on Juvenile Justice for terms beginning Dec. 4, 2017, and ending Oct. 31, 2020.

- Officer Anthony L. Johnson of Columbus (Franklin County) and Reverend Walter S. Moss of Canton (Stark County) to the Ohio Collaborative Community-Police Advisory Board for terms beginning Dec. 5, 2017, and ending April 29, 2020.

- Stiney Vonderhaar of Cincinnati (Hamilton County) reappointed to the Governor's Council on Juvenile Justice for a term beginning Dec. 5, 2017, and ending Oct. 31, 2020.

- James A. Tomaszewski Jr. of Cincinnati (Hamilton County) to the Commercial Dog Breeding Advisory Board for a term beginning Dec. 6, 2017, and ending March 12, 2020.

- Dean J. Hempfling of Delphos (Van Wert County) to the Ohio Rail Development Commission for a term beginning Dec. 6, 2017, and ending Oct. 20, 2021.

- The Honorable David A. Hejmanowski of Delaware (Delaware County) to the Governor's Council on Juvenile Justice for a term beginning Dec. 7, 2017, and ending Oct. 31, 2018.

MARIJUANA

Jimmy Gould, head of CannAscend and supporter of a failed 2015 marijuana legalization campaign, blasted as "a travesty" the state's process for awarding medical marijuana cultivation licenses, after not being included among licensees announced by the Ohio Department of Commerce last week. Gould later pointed to the fact that one of DOC's paid application scorers had a drug dealing conviction, prompting some state officials including Auditor of State Dave Yost to urge a freeze on the licensing process.

However, the process for authorizing businesses to grow marijuana in the state will continue unabated, Ohio Department of Commerce (DOC) spokesperson Stephanie Gostomski announced. Gostomski said a criminal background check was not required for the contract, and that the scoring process was not tainted by the involvement of Trevor Bozeman, who was "highly qualified" for the job.

The Ohio Department of Commerce (DOC) began accepting applications for medical marijuana processors on Monday. The application deadline is 5 p.m. on Friday, Dec. 15, according to the Medical Marijuana Control Program. The state also noted that the application deadline for testing laboratories from privately-held entities was 5 p.m. on Friday, Dec. 8.

STATE GOVERNMENT

Minimum wage earners will see a 15-cent increase in pay come January, or 7 cents if they're waitstaff, according to the Ohio Department of Commerce (DOC). The agency released Monday its calculated increases for wages under the constitutional amendment Ohio voters approved in 2006 to tie Ohio's minimum wage to inflation. The minimum wage for non-tipped employees will be \$8.30 in 2018, up from \$8.15 this year. For tipped employees, it will be \$4.15, up from \$4.08.

For the second time this year, the Controlling Board approved its agenda without any members of the panel holding any of the items for questions. Among the items approved was more than \$5 million for the Ohio Department of Natural Resources to build a new 11,500- square-foot visitors center at Hocking Hills State Park in Hocking County. The park is Ohio's most visited state park and draws more than 2 million visitors each year.

Ohio Department of Administrative Services (DAS) Chief Information Officer (CIO) Stuart Davis solicited \$37,000 from a state vendor to host his speaking session at the Cincinnati CIO Executive Summit, according to Inspector General Randall Meyer's office. The vendor, CGI, is a global information technology (IT) consulting company that has received nearly a quarter of a billion dollars for IT contracts with the state of Ohio since 2010, according to the IG's office. The case is being referred to the City of Columbus Prosecuting Attorney's Office.

TRANSPORTATION

An expert panel before the House Transportation and Public Safety Committee Wednesday informed lawmakers of the myriad impacts that could result from widespread use of driverless vehicles and driver-assisted vehicles, touching on safety measures, concerns of increased unemployment and social effects resulting from what they perceived as probable technological advances.

LEGISLATIVE ACTIVITY:

SENATE

PASSED BY SENATE

HB170 COMPUTER SCIENCE EDUCATION (Rep. Rick Carfagna, Rep. Mike Duffey) With regard to academic content standards and curriculum requirements for computer science; to revise educator qualifications regarding computer science; to create a competitive technology grant program for the 2018-2019 school year; and to make an appropriation.

Vote 31-0

HB174 FRANKLIN COUNTY JUDGES (Rep. Jim Hughes, Rep. Laura Lanese) To add two judges to the Domestic Relations Division of the Franklin County Court of Common Pleas to be elected in 2018.

Vote 31-0, Emergency Clause 31-0

SB170 DRIVER'S LICENSES-MILITARY PERSONNEL (Sen. Frank LaRose) To require the Director of Public Safety to seek approval from the United States Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration to implement a temporary pilot program regarding the waiver of the skills test for a commercial driver's license that applies to present and former military personnel.

Vote 31-0

CONSIDERATION OF HOUSE AMENDMENTS

SB33 LEADS DISCLOSURE (Sen. John Eklund) To allow disclosure of information from the law enforcement automated data system (LEADS) to a defendant in a traffic or criminal case.

Senate Does Concur, Vote 31-0

HOUSE

PASSED BY HOUSE

- HB229** DAY DESIGNATION-CHARLES FOLLIS (Rep. Mark Romanchuk, Rep. Scott Wiggam) To designate February 3 as "Charles Follis Day."
Vote 95-0
- HB254** POW/MIA REMEMBRANCE (Rep. Scott Wiggam) To enact the POW/MIA Remembrance Act requiring the POW/MIA flag to be displayed at certain buildings operated by the state on Armed Forces Day, Memorial Day, Flag Day, Independence Day, National POW/MIA Recognition Day, and Veterans' Day.
Vote 95-0
- HB312** LOCAL GOVERNMENT CREDIT CARDS (Rep. Kirk Schuring, Rep. Dave Greenspan) Regarding use of credit cards and debit cards by political subdivisions.
Vote 95-0
- HB329** PYRAMID PROMOTIONAL SCHEMES (Rep. Dorothy Pelanda) To modify the law governing pyramid promotional schemes.
Vote 95-0
- HB354** TIFFIN-FOSTORIA ADDICTION PROGRAM (Rep. William Reineke) To provide the Tiffin-Fostoria municipal court with concurrent jurisdiction with the Seneca County court of common pleas in operating a drug addiction recovery program.
Vote 95-0
- HB362** HIGHWAY PATROL RETIREMENT (Rep. Rick Carfagna, Rep. Dan Ramos) To revise the law governing the State Highway Patrol Retirement System.
Vote 95-0
- HB380** WORKERS COMP-ILLEGAL ALIENS (Rep. Bill Seitz, Rep. Larry Householder) To prohibit illegal and unauthorized aliens from receiving compensation and certain benefits under Ohio's Workers' Compensation Law.
Vote 65-30
- SB71** ADAMH BOARD CONTRACTS (Sen. Gayle Manning) To allow a board of alcohol, drug addiction, and mental health services to authorize its executive director to execute contracts valued at \$25,000 or less without the board's prior approval.
Vote 91-2

CONSIDERATION OF SENATE AMENDMENTS

- HB132** FANTASY SPORTS REGULATION (Rep. Jonathan Dever, Sen. Robert McColley) To grant the Ohio Casino Control Commission the authority to regulate fantasy contests and to exempt fantasy contests from the gambling laws.
House Does Concur, Vote 92-3

ADOPTED BY HOUSE

- HCR10** CONDEMN ANTI-SEMITISM (Rep. Andrew Thompson) To condemn the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions movement and increasing incidents of anti-Semitism.
Vote 92-2
- HR236** SUPPORT HYPERLOOP TRANSPORTATION (Rep. Jim Hughes) To express support for the Hyperloop Transportation Initiative.
Vote 90-3
- HR316** ELECTION OF THE ASSISTANT MAJORITY WHIP (Rep. Cliff Rosenberger) Relative to the election of the assistant majority whip for the 132nd General Assembly of Ohio.
Vote 92-0