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RH RESOURCES

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Week in Review

February 9, 2018

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.

ATTORNEY GENERAL

The Ohio Attorney General's Office is proceeding with a lawsuit against a man accused of misusing over \$168,000 in charitable funds from a nonprofit created to provide education about Amish culture. The lawsuit says Kenneth Lawton used his Florian K. Lawton Foundation as a pass-through entity to hide personal income and assets. He is accused of using funds from the foundation's bank account to pay for personal expenses between 2010 and 2014.

Attorney General Mike DeWine says checks totaling over \$1.67 million are being sent to more than 2,000 Ohioans this week as part of a previously-reached settlement among Ohio and other states over the price of Provigil, a wakefulness drug used to treat sleep disorders. The average check amount is about \$830.

FY18-19 BUDGET

While Office of Budget and Management (OBM) spokesman John Charlton attributed the January spike in revenue for the state to the federal tax reform passed in December, he cautioned that that "overage now will be balanced by refunds that are greater than we expected or return payments in April and May that are less than we expected." He also noted that OBM believes "taxpayers may have filed quarterly estimated payments early," thus affecting January's totals. Specifically, the state saw a \$204.0 million increase in revenue for the month over and above estimates for January 2018. That was almost exclusively driven by a nearly \$222.6 million or 24.9 percent increase over estimates for the personal income tax.

BUSINESS/CORPORATE

A recent survey of Ohio businesses conducted by the Ohio Chamber of Commerce examining their views on the current state of the economy found that optimism was prevalent in the fourth quarter of 2017, with 86 percent of businesses surveyed rating the current economic climate "good to excellent," up from 70 percent in quarter three of 2017. The chamber attributed the business community's bolstered confidence to the recently passed federal Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, which it said was finalized "right before" the survey was distributed.

CHILDREN/FAMILIES

House Speaker Cliff Rosenberger (R-Clarksville) threw his weight behind pending legislation Thursday that would create a General Revenue funded (GRF) pilot program at Ohio colleges and universities supporting student mentors to at-risk youth threatened by the opioid epidemic. Low-income primary and secondary school students facing drug use at home would be matched to college mentors and volunteer in their communities, earning scholarship money toward their own higher education.

CORRECTIONS

A recent study from the Pew Charitable Trusts examining nationwide crime and imprisonment rates from 2008 through 2016 showed that total crime in Ohio has decreased significantly during that time, but rates of imprisonment have remained unchanged. The crime rate in Ohio decreased by 24 percent, while the imprisonment rate remained flat on average, changing a total of zero percent from 2008 to 2016, according to Pew.

The plight of the wrongfully imprisoned came before the General Assembly Wednesday as House members heard testimony on HB411 (Seitz-Sykes), which seeks to correct a "drafting error" in 124-HB263 (Sykes-Seitz) that has cost the wrongfully convicted major compensation since at least 2012.

EDUCATION

Ohio's general education school voucher program has started accepting applications and will do so through April. The Feb. 1-April 30 window allows families to apply for EdChoice and the Cleveland Scholarship vouchers to attend participating private schools. Ohio's Autism Scholarship and Jon Peterson Special Needs Scholarship programs offer rolling admissions throughout the year.

Up to 50 school districts across the U.S. could get greater flexibility in spending federal education money under a pilot program announced by the U.S. Department of Education (USDOE). The pilot program, authorized by the federal Every Student Succeeds Act, will relax rules on federal funding to enable blending of federal, state and local dollars to create "student-centered funding systems."

Though participation is up 10 percent in the past few years, summer feeding programs still aren't reaching all the families in need, says the Ohio Department of Education, which is looking for more organizations willing to host free meals for students.

The Ohio Department of Education (ODE) opened the application period this week for Community Connectors, the mentorship program created by the Kasich administration. In this fourth round of grants, \$8 million is available to be distributed in grant amounts of up to \$150,000 per project. The state provides a \$3 match for every \$1 provided by local applicants.

ELECTIONS 2018

While the Republican race for governor had fallen to two names by the filing deadline -- Mike DeWine and Mary Taylor -- eight Democrats filed for the May primary by Wednesday's deadline, including 2014 candidate Larry Ealy. Other Democrats who filed included Richard Codray, Dennis Kucinich, Bill O'Neill, Connie Pillich and Joe Schiavoni. They were joined by Paul Ray and Jonathan Heavey, a Cleveland Clinic doctor who has put \$1.5 million of his own money into his campaign.

Meanwhile, legislative caucuses announced their candidate slates, expressing confidence that they will lead to pickups for their respective sides in November. The House Democratic Caucus (OHDC) said it had filed candidates in all 99 House races, though a few are running as write-in candidates. Senate Democrats also said they had filed candidates in all 17 seats on the ballot.

Some of the races see current and former Democratic legislators going up against each other for Senate seats. That includes the 9th District where former Rep. Dale Mallory is challenging Sen. Cecil Thomas; the 11th District, where Reps. Teresa Fedor (D-Toledo) and Michael Ashford (D-Toledo) are looking to succeed term-limited Sen. Edna Brown (D-Toledo); the 21st District, where Rep. Bill Patmon (D-Cleveland) is challenging Sen. Sandra Williams (D-Cleveland); the 23rd Senate District, where Reps. Nickie Antonio (D-Lakewood) and Martin Sweeney (D-Cleveland) are looking to replace Sen. Mike Skindell (D-Lakewood), who is term-limited; and the 25th District, where Rep.

John Barnes (D-Cleveland) is challenging Senate Minority Leader Kenny Yuko (D-Richmond Heights).

Two open congressional seats this year are already seeing a burst of fundraising, according to new reports filed this week with the Federal Elections Commission (FEC). U.S. Rep. Pat Tiberi stepped down from his seat last month, and new candidates are coming forward weekly to fill the seat. Sen. Troy Balderson reported the most money raised in a short amount of time, and has \$122,805 on hand, followed by Republican John Halverstadt and Delaware County Prosecutor Carol O'Brien.

In the 16th Congressional District, where U.S. Rep. Jim Renacci (R-Wadsworth) is running for the U.S. Senate, former Ohio State football standout Anthony Gonzalez is leading the pack in fundraising.

Citing the Electronic Classroom of Tomorrow saga, the use of for-profit management companies and the effect on local school budgets, former Democratic U.S. Rep. Dennis Kucinich said Friday that as governor he would put charter schools largely under the control of local boards of education, among other policy proposals.

Franklin County Recorder Danny O'Connor said he will run for the Democratic nomination for Ohio's 12th Congressional District, which has been vacant since former U.S. Rep. Pat Tiberi (R-Columbus) stepped down last month.

Rachel Crooks announced she will be running for the Democratic nomination for the 88th House District. A Tiffin resident, she has worked in higher education administration at Heidelberg and Tiffin universities, focusing on international student recruitment and services. The Columbus Dispatch reported that Crooks is also a former Trump Tower receptionist who came forward along with other women to accuse President Donald Trump of sexual harassment. Trump has denied the accusations of the women.

Dublin School Board member Stu Harris announced he is running for the Republican nomination for the 21st House District seat currently held by the term-limited Rep. Mike Duffey (R-Worthington). Harris has served on the school board for 12 years. A lawyer, he works at Nationwide Insurance. Duffey has endorsed Harris for the seat.

Sen. Joe Schiavoni's (D-Austintown) gubernatorial campaign launched a new ad recently featuring a testimonial from one of his workers' compensation clients, Joamie. Schiavoni said Joamie's story depicts one of the many times throughout his career when he fought for what is right, despite the odds.

Another Democrat has filed to run for Ohio Supreme Court, joining fellow Democrat Michael P. Donnelly in seeking one of two seats on the ballot this year. Eighth Appellate District Judge Melody Stewart is seeking to challenge newly appointed Justice Mary DeGenaro. Donnelly is seeking the

seat currently held by Justice Terrence O'Donnell, who cannot run for re-election due to age limits. Fifth District Court of Appeals Judge Craig Baldwin is seeking the Republican nomination for O'Donnell's seat.

Democratic gubernatorial candidate Richard Cordray's campaign committee announced Tuesday that Michael Halle will serve as Cordray's campaign manager.

A national Democratic group that targets state races based on the office's ability to influence redistricting announced a number of Ohio statewide offices where it will be working to elect Democrats. Ohio is one of 12 states that the National Democratic Redistricting Group (NDRC) is targeting and one of nine gubernatorial races. The group is led by former U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder.

Planned Parenthood Advocates of Ohio announced the endorsement of 24 Democrats in state legislative and the secretary of state races, saying it was issuing the early endorsements because the candidates have shown they have stood with the organization.

Democratic gubernatorial candidate Dennis Kucinich held a press conference Thursday with running mate Tara Samples to announce that he would make rebuilding the \$330 million Western Hills Viaduct in Cincinnati one of his first capital improvement priorities. Kucinich said the viaduct has been in steady deterioration and has raised concerns for drivers. He said start-up money would come from tapping into the state's Rainy Day Fund, with the rest coming from general obligation bonds.

The following endorsements were made over the week:

- The U.S. Senate campaign of Mike Gibbons announced the endorsements of the Defiance and Knox county Republican parties.
- The gubernatorial campaign of Mike DeWine announced the endorsements of the Defiance and Knox county Republican parties.
- Mary Taylor's gubernatorial campaign received the endorsements of conservatives Brian Fox, Linda Harvey, Lori Viars, T.J. Honerlaw, Lonne Vestal, David Bryan, Thea Shoemake, Heidi Huber, Susan Hardenbergh, Barbara Burkard, Julie Smith, Rep. Tom Brinkman (R-Cincinnati), Bruce Hull, Marlene Johnson, Steve Muterspaw, Pete Patterson, Teresa Bowling, Brad Beckett and Zoanne Kangas Bouche.
- EMILY'S List endorsed Connie Pillich for governor.
- The gubernatorial campaign of Republican Mike DeWine announced the endorsement of the Buckeye Firearms Association and the Montgomery and Preble county Republican parties.

- Ohioans for Concealed Carry endorsed Mary Taylor for governor.
- Democratic Progressives of Ohio endorsed Mary B. Relotto for the 24th Ohio House District.
- The gubernatorial campaign of Mike DeWine announced the endorsements of U.S. Reps. Steve Stivers (R-Columbus) and Mike Turner (R-Centerville).

EMPLOYMENT/UNEMPLOYMENT

Nonfarm payroll employment went up by 200,000 jobs in January, according to new figures released by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) Friday, and the national unemployment rate remained at 4.1 percent for the fourth consecutive month. BLS said the number of unemployed persons was 6.7 million for January and changed little over the month. Among major groups, the unemployment rate for blacks increased to 7.7 percent and edged down for whites to 3.5 percent. The unemployment rates for adult men (3.9 percent), adult women (3.6 percent), teenagers (13.9 percent), Asians (3.0 percent) and Hispanics (5.0 percent) showed little change.

ENERGY

American Electric Power (AEP) of Ohio announced the launch of a "one-stop shop" for energy efficiency gains. The utility said the AEP Ohio Energy Efficiency Marketplace will save consumers not only energy but also money and time. Every day, the AEP Ohio Marketplace will analyze data on more than 50,000 energy efficient products such as appliances, televisions, smart thermostats and water heaters. Customers will find prices, consumer ratings, energy-efficiency ratings and product details all listed in one location to help them find the most efficient products at the lowest prices. More on the AEP Ohio Energy Efficiency Marketplace is available at www.AEPOhioMarketplace.com.

ENVIRONMENT

Attorney General Mike DeWine on Thursday filed a lawsuit against DuPont, alleging the company has knowingly released a toxic chemical from its plant on the Ohio River for decades. The lawsuit seeks restitution and damages for Ohio, saying DuPont should bear the cost of investigating and cleaning up contamination from the chemical -- perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) -- which DuPont used to manufacture Teflon products from the 1950s through 2013.

GAMING/GAMBLING

Ohio's casinos saw a drop in revenues in January, according to new figures released Wednesday, while the seven racinos saw an increase over the same period last year. The Ohio Casino Control Commission said the four casinos earned \$63 million in January, down from nearly \$64 million in January 2017 and down from \$70.1 million in December.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY/STATEHOUSE

The Capitol Square Review and Advisory Board (CSRAB) will celebrate Black History Month throughout February with a special art exhibit and free historical performances each Tuesday at noon.

A \$50,000 grant from the Dominion Energy Charitable Foundation has been awarded to the Capitol Square Foundation (CSF) in support of "Enriching the Experience II," a campaign to raise \$1.5 million to upgrade exhibits and technology at the Ohio Statehouse Museum. Open since 2009, the interactive museum was the first hands-on civics educational experience in the U.S. located in a working Statehouse. The "Enriching the Experience II" campaign is expected to run through 2018.

The Senate Wednesday unanimously passed legislation that would make Ohio's sales tax holiday in August permanent, something the sponsor said is needed so lawmakers don't have to scramble to get it done every year. SB226 (Bacon) would keep the same guidelines as the previous years and make the first weekend in August the default schedule.

Also passing the Senate was SB105 (Tavares), designating the month of October as "Ohio Principals Month." Sen. Charleta Tavares (D-Columbus) said the bill honors the service of elementary, middle, and high school principals and recognizes the importance of their leadership. The bill passed 31-0.

In other legislative action, the House State and Local Government Committee reported out HB453 (Greenspan) regarding a new Local Government Road Improvement Fund; and the House Government Accountability and Oversight Committee reported out HB410 (Seitz-Butler) which deals with civil actions concerning traffic violations.

GOVERNOR

Gov. John R. Kasich has invited Ohioans interested in attending the 2018 "State of the State" address at Fritzsche Theatre at Otterbein University to submit their names online at www.Governor.Ohio.Gov to be eligible for a random ticket lottery. The speech will be in Westerville on Tuesday, March 6, beginning at 7 p.m.

Gov. John Kasich Thursday signed the following six bills into law. All become effective in 90 days except HB145 (Huffman-Sprague), which became effective Thursday, Feb. 8, 2018.

- HB252 (Huffman) which designates the month of January as "Blood Donor Awareness Month."
- HB165 (Gonzales- Conditt) which designates June as "Congenital Cytomegalovirus Awareness Month." - HB362 (Carfagna-Ramos) which revises the law governing the State Highway Patrol Retirement System.

- HB52 (Rezabek) which regulates the solicitation of certain deeds.
- HB145 (Huffman-Sprague) which provides for the establishment of a confidential program for the treatment of impaired practitioners regulated by the State Medical Board, modifies the laws governing the board's regulation of dietitians and respiratory care professionals, makes other changes in the laws administered by the board, provides that the General Assembly's authorization is needed before long-term care services are further included in the Medicaid managed care system.
- SB70 (Coley) which amends the child support laws.

Appointments made during the week include the following:

- Elizabeth Guzman Bowman of Pickerington (Fairfield County) reappointed to the Commission on Hispanic-Latino Affairs for a term beginning Feb. 2, 2018, and ending Oct. 7, 2019.
- John R. "Jack" Wells of Elyria (Lorain County) reappointed to the Ohio Higher Educational Facility Commission for a term beginning Feb. 2, 2018, and ending Jan. 1, 2026.
- Former Speaker Jo Ann Davidson of Reynoldsburg (Franklin County) and Ranjan Manoranjan of Upper Arlington (Franklin County) reappointed to the Ohio Casino Control Commission for terms beginning Feb. 22, 2018, and ending Feb. 21, 2022.
- Scott M. Arthur of Batavia (Clermont Co.) to the State Board of Emergency Medical, Fire, and Transportation Services for a term beginning Feb. 5, 2018, and ending Nov. 12, 2019.
- Elizabeth B. McCormick of Columbus (Franklin County), McKinley E. Brown of Cincinnati (Hamilton County), David C. Jehnsen of Galena (Delaware County) and Will Lucas of Toledo (Lucas County) reappointed to the Ohio Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday Commission for terms beginning Feb. 6, 2018, and ending Dec. 30, 2020.
- M. Beth Trombold of Columbus (Franklin County) reappointed to the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio for a term beginning April 11, 2018, and ending April 10, 2023.
- Eddie L. Steiner of Millersburg (Holmes County) reappointed to the Banking Commission for a term beginning Feb. 6, 2018, and ending Jan. 31, 2022.
- William U. Martin of St. Marys (Auglaize County) reappointed to the Savings and Loan Association and Savings Bank Board for a term beginning Feb. 6, 2018, and ending Jan. 31, 2021.
- Jeffrey T. LeJeune, DVM of Wooster (Wayne County) reappointed to the Ohio Livestock Care Standards Board for a term beginning Feb. 7, 2018, and ending Jan. 15, 2021.

- Hollie R. Hinton of Steubenville (Jefferson County) to the Counselor, Social Worker, and Marriage and Family Therapist Board for a term beginning Feb. 7, 2018, and ending Oct. 10, 2020.
- Robert T. Lameier of Cincinnati (Hamilton County) to the Banking Commission for a term beginning Feb. 8, 2018, and ending Jan. 31, 2021.
- Michael A. Peterson of Massillon (Stark County) to the Youngstown State University Board of Trustees for a term beginning Feb. 8, 2018, and ending April 30. 2025.

HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Former foster youth can get help with housing, employment and health care under a new program launched this week by the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) and the Child and Family Health Collaborative of Ohio (CFHCO). The new "Bridges" program is meant to help those between ages 18 and 21 who were in foster care to become independent in adulthood. It was enabled by enactment of 131-HB50 (Pelanda-Grossman), which extended foster care and adoption supports to age 21.

Advocates for increasing access to dental care in underserved parts of the state were at the Statehouse Tuesday to urge lawmakers to support a bill that would allow for the training of new mid-level care providers. Dentists and citizen advocates associated with the United Health Care Action Network's "Dental Access Now!" campaign in support of SB98 (Lehner-Thomas), which would allow the state to license and train dental therapists, a mid-level provider that focuses on preventive care and minor services like teeth cleaning and extractions.

HIGHER EDUCATION

A new report from the Council for Aid to Education (CAE) ranks Ohio State University at 19th nationally in charitable contributions to colleges and universities in the U.S. The numbers were part of the CAE's annual Voluntary Support of Education survey. CAE said charitable contributions to colleges and universities in the U.S. increased by 6.3 percent in 2017. At \$43.6 billion, CAE said the 2017 total is the highest level reported since the survey's inception in 1957.

The Ohio Department of Higher Education (ODHE), working in partnership with the Inter-University Council and the Ohio Association of Community Colleges, has been selected to receive a \$2.1 million grant from Strong Start to Finish (SSTF) aimed at getting students on successful pathways to college completion while also addressing attainment gaps for historically underserved populations.

Ohio State University announced that Gail Marsh has been named the university's first chief strategy officer. Marsh brings more than three decades of experience to Ohio State. She has served as senior

associate vice president in the Office of Health Sciences and chief strategy officer for the Wexner Medical Center since 2003.

JUDICIAL

The Ohio Supreme Court is readying for briefings in a grand jury confidentiality dispute involving a string of Cuyahoga County officials and a former employee of the Cuyahoga Community College (Tri-C) Campus Police. A split Supreme Court accepted jurisdiction last week in George Daher v. Cuyahoga Community College District, et al. On its face, the case as appealed addresses whether a trial court's ordering confidential inspection of grand jury documents to establish a requester's "particularized need" is in fact a final, appealable order. At the heart of the dispute, however, is whether a civil complainant in the general division of a common pleas court can subpoena the court reporter for records in a previous criminal case against him in the same court, or whether the complainant must file a new petition with the Court.

MARIJUANA

The Ohio Board of Pharmacy (OBP) has awarded a New Jersey company more than \$1 million to operate a medical marijuana toll-free helpline. Direct Success Inc.'s contract lasts for three years, during which it will administer the helpline Monday through Saturday from 7 a.m. to 9 p.m. The aim of the operation is to address adverse events related to medical marijuana and provide guidance to patients, caregivers and physicians.

Two Cincinnati-area lawmakers are seeking to compel the Ohio Department of Commerce (DOC) to establish a closed loop payment processing system for those participating in the Ohio Medical Marijuana Control Program (MMCP). House Majority Floor Leader Bill Seitz's (R-Cincinnati) HB495 and Sen. Lou Terhar's (R-Cincinnati) SB245 would require the state to create accounts that would be used only by registered patients, caregivers and program license holders.

Medical marijuana dispensary applicants who failed to fill out certain forms legibly or include necessary information could receive an opportunity to correct those mistakes, Ohio Board of Pharmacy (OBP) legal counsel Erin Reed said Thursday at a meeting of the Medical Marijuana Advisory Committee (MMAC).

NATURAL RESOURCES

Construction on the Buckeye Lake Dam remains on schedule and is expected to be completed in late 2018, Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) spokesperson Matt Eiselstein told Hannah News. A number of homeowners were recently notified that their structures encroached on state land and are obstructing the state's planned construction path.

Two bald eagles have returned and are actively tending to their nest in the Pinery Narrows area, Cuyahoga Valley National Park (CVNP) said Friday. To protect the eagles from human disturbance, the area surrounding the nest tree will be closed until Tuesday, July 31, 2018, the park said.

Hunters checked 186,247 white-tailed deer throughout Ohio's 2017-2018 deer season, according to ODNR. Last year, 182,169 deer were checked during the 2016-2017 season.

Ohioans should consider donating a portion or all of their state income tax refund to support Ohio's state nature preserves and wildlife, ODNR said Tuesday. "The tax refund donations Ohioans generously give to Ohio State Nature Preserves and the Wildlife Diversity Fund continue to help provide protections for Ohio's most threatened and endangered natural landscapes and species," ODNR Director James Zehringer said.

ODNR has distributed wildland fire personal protective equipment (PPE) and tools to rural fire departments to help them be more effective and safer when responding to wildfires. This equipment helps support volunteer fire departments that serve small communities (populations under 10,000) all across Ohio. Clothing and tools, valued at nearly \$110,000, were distributed to 31 fire departments in 14 Ohio counties.

Volunteers at Cuyahoga Valley Scenic Railroad (CVSR) contributed 104,221 hours in 2017, an increase of nearly 11,000 over 2016, according to the railroad.

PENSIONS

Public workers and retirees argued Tuesday that their state pension system is strong enough to avoid proposed cuts to inflationary benefit payments, but system leadership insisted the cuts are necessary for long-term stability. Several people, including Public Employee Retirees Inc. (PERI) President Geoff Hetrick, urged the House Aging and Long Term Care Committee to reject HB413 (Scherer), which proposes a reduction in annual cost-of-living adjustments (COLAs) for members of the Ohio Public Employees Retirement System (OPERS). But Karen Carraher, CEO of OPERS, said system leadership is "unwavering" in its belief the changes are necessary.

PEOPLE

The funeral for former state legislator John R. Bender Jr., who died Friday, Feb. 2 at the age of 79, was held on Thursday, Feb. 8. Bender served in the Ohio House from 1993 to 2000 and on the State Board of Education from 2007 to 2010.

The Ohio Poverty Law Center (OPLC) Monday announced the hiring of Statehouse veteran Susan Jagers as its new director. Jagers brings more than 20 years of experience in lobbying, policy analysis and communications. Most recently, as a partner at Initiative Consulting, she helped nonprofit clients advocate for policy change at the Statehouse on health issues. Prior to starting

Initiative Consulting, Jagers led the government relations department for the American Cancer Society and co-chaired the successful 2006 Smoke Free Ohio ballot campaign.

The Ohio Public Transit Association announced recently that it has hired W. Curtis Stitt as its executive director. Stitt, recently retired CEO of the Central Ohio Transit Authority, will be responsible for executing OPTA's strategic plan, managing programs, and coordinating government affairs with OPTA's lobbyists. Other duties include membership development and overseeing administrative duties.

POVERTY

Echoing the goals of the 1968 Poor People's Campaign started by Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. and the United Nation's Universal Declaration of Human Rights, organizers at the Ohio Statehouse said they would begin "40 days of action" to address issues of poverty and voting rights beginning on Mother's Day, May 13. The movement, part of efforts in 31 other states and the District of Columbia, will include "nonviolent civil protest" and "direct action" according to organizers, though they did not specify their plans beyond saying they would "risk arrest" as part of a historic wave of civil disobedience.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Appropriately trained tactical medical professionals (TMPs) would be authorized to carry firearms while on duty with special weapons and tactics (SWAT) teams under legislation approved by the Senate Tuesday. The upper chamber voted 31-0 to pass HB79 (Rutherford-Hagan), which moved back to the House for a concurrence vote on Senate amendments. The Senate accepted one amendment on the floor, removing a previous amendment that added coroner's investigators to the bill. Sen. John Eklund (R-Chardon) said that issue requires further vetting.

REDISTRICTING/REAPPORTIONMENT

After weeks of negotiations, state legislators and members of the Fair Districts=Fair Elections Coalition hammered out a compromise plan to reform the congressional redistricting process over the weekend. After the Senate Government Oversight and Reform Committee unanimously approved the substitute version of SJR5 (Huffman) Monday afternoon, the full Senate voted 31-0 Monday night to advance the measure to the House where on Tuesday, the resolution cleared the House Rules and Reference Committee and was passed by the full House 82-10. The issue will now appear on the May ballot. Those voting against the resolution in the House included Reps. John Boccieri (D-Poland), Alicia Reece (D-Cincinnati) and Dan Ramos (D-Lorain), Adam Miller (D-Columbus), John Becker (R-Cincinnati), Tom Brinkman (R-Cincinnati), Bill Dean (R-Xenia), Candace Keller (R-Middletown), Nino Vitale (R-Urbana) and Paul Zeltwanger (R-Mason).

Redistricting sponsor Sen. Matt Huffman (R-Lima) called the deal "historic," during the Senate session, noting the proposal requires "significant" bipartisan cooperation and is the first of its kind in the U.S. The plan specifies that 65 counties cannot be split at all, 18 can be split once and five can be split twice. The cities of Cleveland and Cincinnati would remain whole within their districts. Any map would be subject to a governor's veto or voter referendum.

Meanwhile, the Fair Districts=Fair Elections Coalition, which was circulating its own petitions to put a constitutional amendment on the November ballot but was also part of discussions on SJR5, said it will continue to collect signatures in case the May ballot issue fails. Ohio State University Professor Emeritus and co-author of the Fair Districts proposal Richard Gunther told Hannah News, "We will maintain our active coalition. We will continue to collect signatures. We will continue to collect financial support for the campaign."

STATE GOVERNMENT

The state Controlling Board Monday issued blanket approval to the 30-plus items on its agenda, including funding for county voting systems, construction projects on college campuses, and state agency real estate projects, among others.

UNIONS

Leaders and members of the country's four largest public sector unions gathered Wednesday to preview a landmark U.S. Supreme Court case and their plans to rally workers ahead of oral arguments on the lawsuit. The U.S. Supreme Court will hear oral arguments Monday, Feb. 26 in Janus v. AFSCME Council 31, a case in which justices will consider whether to reverse the court's 1977 ruling in Abood v. Detroit Board of Education, which held it's unconstitutional to require workers to pay dues to unions they don't belong to but that represent employees at their public sector workplace.

UTILITIES

Gov. John Kasich Tuesday went along with the unanimous recommendation of the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio (PUCO) Nominating Council, by announcing the reappointment of PUCO Commissioner M. Beth Trombold to another term on the commission. This appointment runs until April 10, 2023.

The Public Utilities Commission of Ohio (PUCO) has accepted the results of Dominion Energy Ohio's Tuesday, Feb. 6 auction for its standard service offer (SSO) and standard choice offer (SCO). The auction secured natural gas supplies for the period April 1, 2018 to March 31, 2019, resulting in an adjustment of \$0.07 per thousand cubic feet (Mcf) to be added to the New York Mercantile Exchange (NYMEX) month-end settlement price.

LEGISLATIVE ACTIVITY:

HOUSE:

ADOPTED BY HOUSE

- SJR5** CONGRESSIONAL REDISTRICTING PROCESS ESTABLISHMENT (Sen. Matt Huffman) Proposing to amend the version of Section 1 of Article XI that is scheduled to take effect January 1, 2021, and to enact Sections 1, 2, and 3 of Article XIX of the Constitution of the State of Ohio to establish a process for congressional redistricting.

Vote 83-10

SENATE:

ADOPTED BY SENATE

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Vote 31-0

PASSED BY SENATE

- HB79** MEDICAL PROFESSIONAL FIREARMS TRAINING (Rep. Wes Rutherford, Rep. Christina Hagan) To provide for firearms training for tactical medical professionals; to permit such a professional who has received that training and has been authorized by the law enforcement agency to carry firearms while on duty; and to grant such a professional the same right to carry a concealed handgun in this state as a concealed handgun licensee.

Vote 31-0

- SB105** MONTH DESIGNATION-OHIO PRINCIPALS (Sen. Charleta Tavares) To designate the month of October as "Ohio Principals Month."

Vote 31-0

- SB226** PERMANENT SALES TAX HOLIDAY (Sen. Kevin Bacon) To provide for a permanent three-day sales tax "holiday" each August during which sales of clothing and school supplies are exempt from sales and use tax.

Vote 31-0