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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 joined Sen. Randy Gardner (R-Bowling Green) in Toledo Tuesday to announce details on \$3 million in grants to help replicate or expand Drug Abuse Response Teams (DART) and Quick Response Teams (QRT) to address the opioid epidemic in Ohio. Grant funding will support efforts similar to QRTs in Colerain Township (Hamilton County) and Summit County, as well as the DART in Lucas County.

FY16-17 BUDGET

Underspending across all categories of state government contributed significantly to the state's ending FY17 with \$170.9 million in unencumbered, unobligated funds, Office of Budget and Management (OBM) Director Tim Keen said Friday. Also playing into the equation was the significant fund balance the state began the fiscal year with, Keen added. That totaled \$565.5 million

after \$29.5 million was deposited into the Rainy Day Fund at the start of FY17. There will be no deposit into the Rainy Day Fund this year.

EDUCATION

Rep. Kristin Boggs (D-Columbus) Monday sent a letter to Auditor of State Dave Yost, asking him to recuse himself from audits of the Electronic Classroom of Tomorrow (ECOT) and for a special independent auditor to be appointed to look into the charter school.

The Ohio State Board of Education voted unanimously Tuesday to approve an amended version of the state's plan for implementing the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) in addition to approving an English language arts cut score for the third grade reading guarantee and postponing a vote on recommending changes to end-of-course testing requirements to a future meeting. The vote to approve the ESSA plan was the culmination of many months of committee meetings to determine how the state should model its education policy before sending the plan to the U.S. Department of Education (USDOE) for review.

The Ohio Supreme Court declined Wednesday to temporarily block state efforts to recover funding from Electronic Classroom of Tomorrow (ECOT), Ohio's largest online charter school. Meanwhile, a county judge ruled for the state in an open meetings lawsuit ECOT filed recently against the State Board of Education.

ELECTIONS 2018

Touting her experience as lieutenant governor Friday, Mary Taylor said there is "much more work" to be done, and that she's the one to do it as the next governor. Taylor is part of a crowded field of candidates, with four each on the Republican and Democratic sides. She confirmed her run on Twitter in February, but her Friday address to the Cleveland City Club was described by the campaign as her "announcement as a candidate."

U.S. Rep. Jim Renacci's (R-Wadsworth) gubernatorial campaign announced Opportunity Ohio President Matt Mayer has joined the campaign as a strategic advisor.

U.S. Sen. Sherrod Brown's (D-OH) re-election campaign says it will report \$2.6 million in donations for the second quarter and has \$6.7 million on hand, more than double what the campaign had at this point in the 2012 election.

Susan Manchester, a Waynesville woman who previously worked as an aide for U.S. Rep. Jim Jordan (R-Urbana), announced this week that she will run for the 84th House District next year. The seat is currently held by Rep. Keith Faber (R-Celina), who is running for state auditor in 2018.

The following endorsements were made over the week:

- Cincinnati Mayor John Cranley and Toledo Mayor Paula Hicks-Hudson endorsed the Drug Price Relief Act.

EMPLOYMENT/UNEMPLOYMENT

The national unemployment rate rose to 4.4 percent in June, up from 4.3 percent in May, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). Total non-farm payroll employment increased by 222,000 in June, with the country seeing increases in health care, social assistance, financial activities and mining, the bureau said in a news release. Employment growth has averaged 180,000 per month thus far this year, slightly lower than the average monthly gain of 187,000 in 2016.

ENVIRONMENT

Gov. John Kasich on Friday signed SB 2 (Hite), which includes a variety of reforms involving the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency and the Lake Erie Commission. The bill is similar to last session's water quality mid-biennium review (MBR) bill, SB 333 (Hite), which died during the lame duck session.

Ohio EPA is helping eligible homeowners in Crawford, Marion, Seneca and Wyandot counties repair or replace failing home sewage treatment systems (HSTS) with principal forgiveness loans to their county health departments. This state initiative, which is part of Ohio's Water Pollution Control Loan Fund (WPCLF), is meant to assist local residents by eliminating failing HSTS at an affordable cost.

Scientists are predicting that the Western Basin of Lake Erie will experience a significant harmful algal bloom (HAB) this summer, potentially reaching levels last seen in 2013 and 2014.

GAMING

Ohio's four casinos and seven racinos saw combined increased revenue in June compared to the same time last year but uniformly less than in May 2017. According to figures released this week by the Ohio Casino Control Commission, the four casinos earned \$64 million in June, up from \$62.7 million in June 2016 and down from \$70.2 million in May.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY/STATEHOUSE

The prospect of Senate action to override budget vetoes moved further out into the future Monday with an announcement that the chamber cancelled the final if-needed sessions included on its long-term calendar for the first half of 2017. The Senate had already cancelled this week's if-needed Wednesday session, and has now scrubbed those set for Tuesday, July 18 and Wednesday, July 19.

Rep. Jim Butler (R-Dayton) introduced legislation this week that he said would require the General Assembly to sign off on any court-sanctioned final settlement agreement, also known as a consent decree, that a state agency or public official enters into that would permanently alter or prohibit the enforcement of an Ohio law.

GOVERNOR

Appointments made during the week include the following:

- Kyle Johnson of Bowling Green (Wood County) to serve as the student member on the Bowling Green State University Board of Trustees for a term beginning July 7, 2017, and ending May 17, 2019.
- Larry L. Long of Bexley (Franklin County) reappointed to the State Audit Committee for a term beginning July 10, 2017, and ending June 30, 2020.
- Patrick J. Kenney of Sylvania (Lucas County) to the University of Toledo Board of Trustees for a term beginning July 10, 2017, and ending July 1, 2026.
- F. Patrick D'Eramo of Holland (Lucas County) to the University of Toledo Board of Trustees for a term beginning July 10, 2017, and ending July 1, 2021.
- Hedyeh Elahinia of Sylvania (Lucas County) as a student member on the University of Toledo Board of Trustees for a term beginning July 10, 2017, and ending July 1, 2019.
- John H. Hull of Ottawa Hills (Lucas County) reappointed to the Petroleum Underground Storage Tank Release Compensation Board for a term beginning July 11, 2017, and ending July 10, 2020.
- James F. Dicke II of New Bremen (Auglaize County), Robert J. Hankins of Canton (Stark County), and Jon D. Holt of Dayton (Montgomery County) reappointed to the Ohio Arts Council for terms beginning July 11, 2017, and ending July 1, 2022.

HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

U.S. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) unveiled the latest version of the bill Republicans hope will repeal and replace the Affordable Care Act Thursday, and while U.S. Sen. Sherrod Brown (D-OH) said he is still opposed, U.S. Sen. Rob Portman (R-OH), a key vote on the measure, said he is looking it over. Portman said he is opposed to voting on the bill immediately.

MARIJUANA

A medical marijuana partnership including Ohio football luminaries plans to open four dispensaries in the Cleveland area, pot entrepreneur Jim Buchanan said Tuesday. Buchanan, joined by Cleveland Glenville High School football coach Ted Ginn Sr. and former Ohio State University quarterback and Heisman Trophy winner Troy Smith, was one of only two individuals to testify during the Ohio Board of Pharmacy's (OBP) medical marijuana rules hearing. Buchanan said the organization, Ohio Cannabis Solution, also includes former Cleveland Browns running back Eric Metcalf. Buchanan said they plan to open dispensaries in Cleveland, South Euclid, Warrensville Heights and Lakewood.

POLITICS

Vice President Mike Pence will keynote the Ohio GOP State Dinner set for Saturday, July 22 in the Archie Griffin Grand Ballroom of the Ohio Union on the campus of Ohio State University.

UTILITIES

The Ohio Consumers' Counsel (OCC) is renewing a dispute with the utility industry over whether power companies are required to meet a 3 percent cap on their renewable energy costs or, as an alternative, are not required to exceed the 3 percent cap on renewable sources under energy omnibus SB 221 (Schuler). As part of American Electric Power (AEP) of Ohio's renewable energy rate case currently before the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio (PUCO), the consumers' counsel has asked AEP to provide calculations showing whether its billed charges for renewable energy constitute more than 3 percent of customers' total electric costs.

LEGISLATIVE ACTIVITY:

SENATE:

No Senate activity to report.

HOUSE:

No House activity to report.