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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

A recent Centers for Disease Control (CDC) study shows Ohio has fared much better than the nation at large in the battle against prescription opioids. In 2011 the state implemented pain clinic regulation and mandated that clinicians review prescription drug monitoring program (PDMP) data, which the CDC says correlates with a decrease of morphine milligram equivalents (MMEs) prescribed per capita in 85 percent of Ohio counties. Other states that enacted the same mandates showed similar reductions.

AGRICULTURE

Speaking before state and national press, Gov. John Kasich vowed that while he was saddened, the 2017 Ohio State Fair would not be defined by the ride incident that killed one and injured seven the night before. Kasich said he had "full and total confidence" in the Ohio State Highway Patrol

investigation, which he said would be done without his involvement and with great transparency, and said the lessons learned could then be passed on to amusement parks and fairs across the U.S.

AUDITOR OF STATE

Auditor Dave Yost Wednesday released a report, alongside legislation from Rep. Dave Greenspan (R-Westlake) and Rep. Kirk Schuring (R-Canton), that encourages more control and oversight of how local governments are allowed to use credit cards. At the Statehouse, Yost detailed the report, which showed that some of Ohio's local governments lack policy on the use of credit cards for public purposes, with instances ranging from small negligence to outright misuse of public funds.

BALLOT ISSUES

Secretary of State Jon Husted announced the order of issues for the November 2017 ballot: an initiated constitutional amendment on crime victims' rights will be Issue 1, and an initiated statute on prescription drug prices will be Issue 2. Ballot language will be determined later.

DEATH PENALTY

There were no reported complications Wednesday when child rapist/murderer Ronald Phillips, 43, died by lethal injection at 10:43 a.m. in the Ohio Death House. Officially scheduled for 10 a.m., the execution was reportedly delayed somewhat to allow Phillips to visit with family.

EDUCATION

Auditor Dave Yost wants the Ohio Department of Education to hold back some of Electronic Classroom of Tomorrow's (ECOT) funding for the upcoming school year and scrutinize its enrollment records for overlap with other schools. Statements the online charter school made in court don't jibe with the 14,000-plus student headcount the school is claiming for the 2017-2018 academic year, Yost wrote in a letter to Superintendent Paolo DeMaria last week.

The Ohio Department of Education announced a new effort Tuesday with global staffing firm Adecco Group to help students get work experience and businesses find talent while easing concerns about the practical challenges of bringing teenagers into plants and offices.

Ohio House members got an overview of the data on income and academic achievement and discussed where to focus further discussions Thursday at the first meeting of the Speaker's Task Force on Education and Poverty.

ELECTIONS

Rep. Kathleen Clyde (D-Kent) announced new legislation Monday that would prevent the state from cancelling a voter's registration for moving within the state or not voting in elections. Clyde, a Democratic candidate for secretary of state, said her HB 274 would still allow removing voters from the rolls for valid reasons such as death, moving out of state, or if the voter requests it. Calling the bill the "Stop the Purge Act," she said she is introducing it on the heels of a report by the U.S. Election Assistance Commission showing polling problems in Ohio.

ELECTIONS 2018

Republican U.S. Senate candidate Mike Gibbons announced that he has launched a six-figure cable television and digital advertising campaign. The ad, titled "Vacation," criticizes Congress for not passing legislation to repeal the Affordable Care Act.

The following endorsements were made over the week:

- Reps. Robert Cupp, Bill Seitz, Steve Arndt, John Becker, Tom Brinkman, Jim Butler, Margaret Conditt, Jonathan Dever, Jay Edwards, Tim Ginter, Wes Goodman, Steve Hambley, Brian Hill, Darrell Kick, Laura Lanese, Scott Lipps, Derek Merrin, Bill Reineke, Jeff Rezabek, Mark Romanchuk, Gary Scherer and Dick Stein endorsed Dorothy Pelandia for secretary of state.

EMPLOYMENT/UNEMPLOYMENT

Ohio's jobless rate edged back up to 5.0 percent last month after falling to 4.9 percent in May, ranking it among the highest unemployment rates in the nation. Total employment in the state was up 1 percent since June 2016, however, a number the federal Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) called "statistically significant." Non-agricultural wages and salary employment in Ohio increased 11,500 over the month, from a revised 5,517,300 in May to 5,528,800 in June, BLS reported Friday.

ENVIRONMENT

Gov. John Kasich was in Cleveland Tuesday to tout the success of past and continuing efforts to improve Lake Erie water quality at a ceremonial bill signing at the Great Lakes Science Center. Earlier this month, Kasich signed SB 2 (Hite), which would make reforms to the Lake Erie Commission and the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

FEDERAL

With Sen. John McCain casting a dramatic decisive vote, the Senate early Friday morning narrowly defeated a scaled back bill dismantling the 2010 health law, leaving in question the future of GOP promises to repeal the law known as Obamacare.

GAMBLING

While the Senate may have tried to save the Permanent Joint Committee on Gaming and Wagering by taking language out of the biennial budget that sunset it, the committee ultimately did not survive after the conference committee restored the House-backed sunset measure and Gov. John Kasich signed the budget.

GOVERNOR

Appointments made during the week include the following:

- Comfort A. Cole-Keneh of Gahanna (Franklin County), Ibrahima Sow of Reynoldsburg, (Franklin County) and Eugenie Kirenga of Kettering (Greene County), to the New African Immigrants Commission for terms beginning July 21, 2017 and ending Oct. 7, 2017.

- Rosaire Ifedi of Columbus (Franklin County), Abass M. Bangura of Reynoldsburg, (Franklin County) and Tariq Mohamed of New Albany (Franklin County) to the New African Immigrants Commission for terms beginning July 21, 2017 and ending Oct. 7, 2018.
- Brigadier General Todd M. Audet of Sylvania (Lucas County) to the Transportation Review Advisory Board for a term beginning July 21, 2017 and ending June 29, 2022.
- David Regula of Navarre (Stark Co.) reappointed to the Transportation Review Advisory Board for a term beginning July 21, 2017 and ending June 29, 2022.
- Todd L. Poole of Powell (Delaware Co.) to the State Fire Council for a term beginning July 26, 2017, and ending Nov. 1, 2019.
- Steven A. Moore of Otway (Scioto County) to the Shawnee State University Board of Trustees for a term beginning July 27, 2017 and ending June 30, 2026.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

A 2015 law requiring that police officers be present at the site of red-light and speed cameras violates the Ohio Constitution, the Ohio Supreme Court said Wednesday in a ruling that also struck down two other restrictions on use of the cameras. The opinion by Justice Patrick Fischer finds provisions of SB 342 (Seitz), which took effect in 2015 after passage in late 2014, do not qualify as "general laws" and thus violate municipalities' home rule powers in Article XVIII, Section 3 of the Ohio Constitution.

MARIJUANA

The Ohio Board of Pharmacy (OBP) on Thursday released a draft map detailing where medical marijuana dispensaries will be allowed to be located. The map is broken down into four quadrants including a northwest region, northeast region, southwest region and southeast region. Further maps break down the regions into districts, where various numbers of dispensaries will be permitted. In the northwest region, 10 total dispensaries will be permitted; in the northeast, 18; in the southeast, 17; and in the southwest, 15.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Ohio Department of Commerce (DOC) Director Jacqueline Williams on Monday announced the appointment of Jeff Hussey as state fire marshal. Hussey had been serving as interim state fire marshal since the retirement of Larry Flowers in May. Prior to his promotion, Hussey served as chief deputy state fire marshal under Flowers.

STATE GOVERNMENT

Ohio EPA is helping eligible homeowners in 21 additional counties repair or replace failing home sewage treatment systems (HSTS) with principal forgiveness loans to their county commissions or health departments. This is in addition to the aid announced earlier to Crawford, Marion, Seneca and Wyandot counties.

UTILITIES

The PUCO this week kicked off its second round of the PowerForward initiative – a wide-ranging discussion of the state’s energy future. The three-day event featured an array of panelists examining current and future grid technologies. PUCO Chairman Asim Haque said “I think it will be a unique conversation and frankly for a state PUC, it doesn’t really involve policy and it doesn’t really involve ratemaking, so we’re totally out of our element,” he continued, “but we’re going to try to get in the element because we believe this conversation is absolutely necessary in order to have the third conversation, which is the ratemaking/regulation marketplace conversation.”

WORKERS’ COMPENSATION

The Ohio Bureau of Workers’ Compensation (BWC) has announced more than a quarter million dollars in workplace safety grants as part of its latest round of awards. Twelve Ohio employers will share more than \$294,675.00 in Safety Intervention Grants to purchase equipment meant to substantially reduce or eliminate workplace injuries and illnesses.

LEGISLATIVE ACTIVITY:

SENATE:

No Senate activity to report.

HOUSE:

No House activity to report.