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Week in Review
Monday, August 31, 2015

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. Please note the issues are listed alphabetically and in no way signify the level of importance:

AFFORDABLE CARE ACT (ACA)

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) announced that 34 health centers will receive \$1.65 million in Affordable Care Act funding to recognize the centers' achievement in providing high quality, comprehensive care.

AGRICULTURE

The House Agriculture and Rural Development Committee kicked off its slate of committee meetings outside the Statehouse on Ohio State University's (OSU) campus, hearing testimony from a variety of speakers detailing technological advancements in agriculture.

BALLOT ISSUES

Secretary of State Jon Husted released the official ballot titles last Tuesday for the statewide initiatives appearing on the November ballot, including a title describing ResponsibleOhio's Issue 3 marijuana legalization campaign as a monopoly. ResponsibleOhio included objections to that wording in a lawsuit filed last Thursday that also challenges official ballot language approved recently by the Ballot Board, on the grounds that it's prejudicial against the campaign.

The Ohio Hospital Association (OHA) said that it opposes Issue 3, the constitutional amendment brought by Responsible Ohio that will legalize marijuana for personal and medical use. In a statement, OHA President and CEO Mike Abrams said OHA believes marijuana use negatively affects the long-term health of Ohioans.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE

Senate President Keith Faber (R-Celina) said that Republican lawmakers should reconsider the viewpoint that working toward criminal justice reform is being "soft on crime." "The reality is, we need to recognize, and as I say, rightsize our criminal justice system," Faber told attendees of the Eighth Annual Legislative Leaders Summit hosted by GOPAC, an organization that says it coaches Republicans on "effective ways to communicate conservative ideas and solutions."

EDUCATION

The Ohio Education Association and Youngstown schools officials sued the state and Superintendent Richard Ross to block HB 70 (Brenner-Driehaus), which puts Youngstown under a revamped Academic Distress Commission and a powerful appointed CEO. The lawsuit, filed in Franklin County Common Pleas Court, asserts lawmakers flouted procedure in passing the new law and also presses the rights of local voters to pick their elected school representatives.

More than a dozen Ohio school districts, most in Cuyahoga County, failed to provide adequate special education services to children housed in juvenile detention, an Ohio Department of Education (ODE) investigation has concluded. The American Civil Liberties Union of Ohio filed a class action administrative complaint earlier this year with ODE's Office of Exceptional Children, alleging students housed at Cuyahoga County Juvenile Detention Center were denied their right to a free and appropriate public education.

Innovation Ohio, the Ohio Education Association (OEA) and local school officials called Thursday for lawmakers to finish the job on charter school reforms and consider expanding pending legislation to address financial troubles charter enrollment can cause local districts.

ELECTIONS 2015

Sen. Frank LaRose (R-Copley) introduced legislation requiring campaign finance reports to be filed electronically with county boards of elections. LaRose said current Ohio law does not authorize local county boards to permit electronic filing, even on a voluntary basis. He said even though the secretary of state's office manages an online campaign finance reporting system for campaigns and committees at a statewide level, local boards are not authorized to do the same.

ELECTIONS 2016

U.S. Sen. Rob Portman (R-OH) has slowly narrowed the gap with former Gov. Ted Strickland in a new poll, finding the race within the margin of error. When the Quinnipiac University Poll first started surveying on the 2016 U.S. Senate race for Portman's seat, Strickland had a 9-point lead. In June, the lead shrunk to 6 percentage points. In the latest survey, Strickland leads Portman 44 percent to 41 percent, the poll said Tuesday. A race between Portman and Democratic Cincinnati Councilman P.G. Sittenfeld finds Portman leading 46 percent to 25 percent.

EMPLOYMENT/UNEMPLOYMENT

Ohio's unemployment rate was back to 5 percent in July, the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) said Friday, as the state added 14,900 jobs over the month. The last time Ohio was at 5 percent was November 2014, and it is the lowest the number has been in 2015.

ENERGY

PJM Interconnection, Ohio's regional transmission organization (RTO), announced that its first electric auction to include "capacity performance" has secured a 20 percent surplus over anticipated peak demand for June 1, 2018 through May 31, 2019, hopefully avoiding the outages of 2014's polar vortex. Industry analysts said new auction standards, approved by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) in June, could also cost ratepayers \$6 billion over the next four years and \$700 million annually long-term.

ENVIRONMENT

A harmful algal bloom containing the toxin microcystin has been discovered in the Ohio River, according to the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency (Ohio EPA). The state is analyzing raw samples from the river and is testing public water systems in Steubenville and Bellaire, which are upriver from the bloom. The agency has also provided technical assistance to Wheeling, WV, which is downriver from the bloom.

FEDERAL

The U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) accepted the governor's recent request to declare counties in the Buckeye Lake region an economic disaster area resulting from low lake water levels that have affected tourism and business. Small businesses, private nonprofits and small agricultural cooperatives and aquaculture businesses in the affected counties can now apply for Economic Injury Disaster Loans (EIDLs) up to \$2 million. Loan rates of 4 percent for small businesses and 2.625 percent for nonprofit organizations have terms up to 30 years, according to the SBA.

GAMING

State gambling and mental health agencies released a new public education campaign targeting problem gambling, urging gamblers to "Be the 95 Percent," a reference to the proportion of those who play responsibly.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY/STATEHOUSE

At least seven people have applied to fill the vacant 89th House District seat, including former state Rep. Tom Lendrum. The seat was vacated by former Rep. Steve Kraus (R-Marblehead) after a jury convicted him of a felony theft charge.

GOVERNOR

The governor made the following appointments during the week:

- James M. Adams of Massillon (Stark County) reappointed to the State Board of Sanitarian Registration for a term beginning Aug. 21, 2015, and ending Aug. 14, 2018.
- Keith L. Krinn of Westerville (Delaware County) to the State Board of Sanitarian Registration for a term beginning Aug. 21, 2015, and ending Aug. 14, 2018.
- Donald L. Mason of Zanesville (Muskingum County) to the Interstate Oil and Gas Compact Commission for a term beginning Aug. 21, 2015, and continuing at the pleasure of the governor.
- Sean M.I. Bailey of Georgetown (Brown County) reappointed to the Governor's Council on People with Disabilities for a term beginning Aug. 24, 2015 and ending Aug. 19, 2018.

HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

Proponents for increasing federal funding for cancer research readied 6,000 Ohioans' petitions to deliver to their U.S. senators last Tuesday, as advocates with the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network (ACS CAN) asked for an additional \$1 billion investment to the National Cancer Institute over the next two years.

The new Commission on Infant Mortality met for the first time last Wednesday, outlining initial plans to inventory state programs targeted toward its namesake issue and getting a rundown of the problem from Medicaid and the Commission on Minority Health. Sen. Shannon Jones (R-Springboro), co-chairwoman of the commission and a force behind the legislation that created it, said understanding who is working on the issue and to what effect was a main reason for convening the group.

HOUSING

Reps. Jonathan Dever (R-Cincinnati) and Robert McColley (R-Napoleon) announced new legislation that they said would give homeowners and lenders the option of allowing homeowners to remain in their homes as tenants rather than foreclosing on the property.

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) announced it had awarded nearly \$13.9 million to the state, Cuyahoga County, and the cities of Akron and Cleveland to reduce the number of lead-poisoned children in the state.

SMOKING/E-CIGARETTES

With the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) imposing more delays on the regulation of electronic cigarettes, Attorney General Mike DeWine joined an Ohio State University cancer

researcher to warn parents against the marketing of e-cigarettes by the vapor industry and their potential use by minors in devices resembling school supplies. The AG, who led a coalition of state attorneys general in 2013 in petitioning the FDA to regulate nicotine vapor, gathered with Deputy Director Peter Shields of OSU's Comprehensive Cancer Center, James Cancer Hospital and Solove Research Institute (OSUCCC-James) to draw attention to the precipitous rise in e-cigarette advertising and use among high school students since 2011.

STATE GOVERNMENT

Fiscal Year (FY) 2015 was another record-setting year for the Ohio Department of Commerce Division of Unclaimed Funds, as \$76 million was returned to Ohioans. According to the department, "This was the second year in a row that the division topped its previous best, beating the record of \$74.4 million set in FY14. This represents a 2 percent increase, and the average claim was for \$1,672."

LEGISLATIVE ACTIVITY

No legislative activity to report while legislators are on summer recess.