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Week in Review

September 1, 2017

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

New rules aimed at driving down abuse of opiate painkillers took effect on Thursday, and state regulatory boards said that they expect the regulations will be supported by prescribers around the state. Representatives of the State Medical Board, the Board of Pharmacy, the Board of Nursing, the Dental Board, the departments of health and mental health and addiction services joined with Gov. John Kasich at the Statehouse Wednesday to highlight the rules ahead of the effective date.

Stronger drugs fueled an increase in unintentional overdose deaths in 2016, according to a new report released Wednesday by the Ohio Department of Health (ODH). According to the report, there was a significant increase in overdose deaths involving the opioid fentanyl, in addition to the emergence of more powerful fentanyl-related drugs like carfentanil being mixed with drugs like cocaine. Fentanyl can be hundreds of times stronger than heroin, and other related drugs can be even stronger, the report said.

BALLOT ISSUES

A report commissioned by backers of Issue 2, the Drug Price Relief Act, claims the state could save as much as \$536 million a year by paying for prescription drugs what the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs pays for the same drugs. The report, written by Maxwell J. Mehlman, a Case Western Reserve University professor of law, challenged an earlier report commissioned by opponents of Issue 2 that claimed the initiated statute would be unworkable, saying that claim is erroneous.

Secretary of State Jon Husted announced titles for State Issues 1 and 2 on Tuesday and released explanations and arguments for and against both issues. Those titles are as follows: State Issue 1: "Rights for Crime Victims"; and State Issue 2: "To require state agencies to not pay more for prescription drugs than the federal Department of Veterans Affairs and require state payment of attorney fees and expenses to specific individuals for defense of the law."

The Yes on Issue 2 campaign Tuesday challenged pharmaceutical executives to debate Issue 2, the Drug Price Relief Act, during an upcoming forum that the campaign said would be moderated by Ohio journalists. The campaign said the drug industry could pick one of its CEOs to debate Michael Weinstein, the president of the AIDS Healthcare Foundation, at the unspecified forum.

ELECTIONS 2018

Former U.S. Rep. Zack Space became the first Democrat to officially join the 2018 state auditor's race. Space, who served in Congress from 2007 until his defeat by current U.S. Rep. Bob Gibbs (R-Lakeville) in 2010, announced his campaign in Martins Ferry, and also held events in Zanesville, Columbus and Lima. If no other candidates file, Space will likely face Rep. Keith Faber (R-Celina) next year in the General Election.

Republican U.S. Senate candidate Josh Mandel announced the formation of a faith outreach team for the 2018 campaign. Mandel, the state treasurer, said the first policy goal of the Faith Outreach Team is the repeal of the federal "Johnson Amendment," which bars churches from endorsing political candidates.

Democratic gubernatorial candidate Betty Sutton announced a campaign proposal Wednesday that would create a new Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity, which she said would put Ohio workers at the center of economic policy and planning while streamlining state bureaucracy focused on training, worker safety and job growth.

Strongsville City Councilman Gordon Short announced Thursday that he will run for the 7th Ohio House District in 2018. The seat is currently held by Rep. Tom Patton (R-Strongsville), who is running for Congress. Short is a CPA and tax attorney who serves as the managing director of tax advisory services at global X, a real estate investment and tax advisory firm in Cleveland. He said he sees the open seat in the House as an opportunity to use his tax background to benefit the residents of the district.

ENERGY

The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) authorized Nexus Gas Transmission LLC to construct an approximately 255-mile pipeline, the majority of which will be built in Ohio. The pipeline will originate at the Kensington Processing Plant in Columbiana County, extending through Ohio and connecting with DTE Gas in Washtenaw County, MI. The project will include about 209.8 miles of new 36-inch diameter pipeline in Columbiana, Stark, Summit, Wayne, Medina, Lorain, Huron, Erie, Sandusky, Wood, Lucas, Henry and Fulton counties. Approximately 46.8 miles of the pipeline will be placed in Michigan.

The 13-state regional transmission organization (RTO) covering Ohio, PJM Interconnection, will hold its second forum on electric grid security and resilience Monday and Tuesday, Sept. 18-19 in Baltimore MD. Extreme weather, cyberattacks and possible physical attacks are driving electric suppliers and grid operators to emphasize resilience in the power system, says PJM.

FEDERAL

The state faces "grave threats" to its air, water and land if President Donald Trump's proposal to cut the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) by 30 percent is enacted this fall, according to a new report from the Environmental Defense Fund (EDF). "State of Risk: Ohio" provides an overview of USEPA's footprint in Ohio and examines how the proposed cuts threaten public health as well as commerce and tourism in the Buckeye State. The federal agency has provided \$225 million in grants alone to Ohio over five years, according to the report.

GOVERNOR

Appointments made during the week include the following:

- Christopher A. Whistler of Gahanna (Franklin County) to the Ohio Water Development Authority for a term beginning Aug. 25, 2017 and ending June 30, 2025.
- Robert K. Larrimer of Upper Arlington (Franklin County) to the Ohio Architects Board for a term beginning Aug. 28, 2017, and ending Oct. 2, 2021.
- Douglas S. Fisher, of Lancaster (Fairfield County) to the Radiation Advisory Board for a term beginning Aug. 29, 2017, and ending Sept. 6, 2018.
- Drew C. Forhan of Hudson (Summit County) to the Bowling Green State University Board of Trustees for a term beginning Aug. 30, 2017, and ending May 17, 2026.
- Christopher R. Potts of Upper Arlington (Franklin County) to the Ohio Retirement Study Council for a term beginning Aug. 30, 2017, and ending June 30, 2020.
- Benjamin W. Fields of Powell (Delaware County) to the State Board of Psychology for a term beginning Aug. 31, 2017, and ending Oct. 4, 2020.
- Rev. Jeremy M. Moyers of Mt. Sterling (Madison County) to the Financial Planning and Supervision Commission for village of Mt. Sterling for a term beginning Aug. 31, 2017, and continuing at the pleasure of the governor.
- Dustin J. Parker of Mt. Sterling (Madison County) to the Financial Planning and Supervision Commission for village of Mt. Sterling for a term beginning Aug. 31, 2017, and continuing at the pleasure of the governor.

POLITICS

Alex Arshinkoff, who chaired the Summit County Republican Party for nearly 40 years, died Monday, Aug. 28, according to the Ohio Republican Party. He was 62. The *Akron Beacon Journal* reported that Arshinkoff had been in failing health since a car accident in 2012 and had been undergoing dialysis for several years. Former state Rep. Bryan Williams, who heads the Summit County Republican Party's executive committee, had recently taken the lead on the party's day-to-day operations.

PUBLIC SAFETY

The Ohio State Highway Patrol (OSHP) announced Thursday that the investigation into July's fatal ride malfunction at the Ohio State Fair will not result in criminal charges. According to OSHP, troopers presented their findings to Franklin County Prosecutor Ron O'Brien, who concluded there was not enough evidence to proceed with a criminal case. On July 26, the Fire Ball ride at the Ohio State Fair broke apart during operation, killing Tyler Jarrell, an 18-year-old high school student, and injuring seven others.

UTILITIES

The Ohio Consumers' Counsel (OCC) is redoubling support for HB 247 (Romanchuk) rollbacks on electric billing riders as the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio (PUCO) prepares to vote on an agreement between PUCO staff, American Electric Power (AEP) of Ohio, and 15 signatories representing diverse energy and consumer interests. Not among them, OCC pans the ongoing "subsidies" under the settlement that come despite AEP Ohio profits exceeding those of any other state where the company operates.

WORKERS' COMPENSATION

The Ohio Bureau of Workers' Compensation (BWC) Board of Directors gave initial consideration Friday to the latest proposed rate cut for local government entities and granted final approval to a new consultant in its minority and women's investment contractor program. The Minority and/or Women Business Enterprise (MWBE) program has been dogged by sub-par returns since the previous contract was awarded in 2012, an outside analyst reviewing its performance had stated in June.

WORKFORCE

A survey released by the Associated General Contractors of America (AGC America) revealed that 70 percent of contractors nationwide had trouble filling hourly craft positions, including 73 percent of contractors in Ohio. But, according to AGC Ohio Executive Director Rich Hobbs, Ohio is "in much better shape" than many neighboring states, largely thanks to the state's advanced training programs.

LEGISLATIVE ACTIVITY:

No legislative activity to report.