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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**

Pharmaceutical company Pfizer will give \$500,000 to the Foundation for Appalachian Ohio to help support programs aimed at helping youth struggling with rural poverty and the effects of addiction, Gov. John Kasich announced Thursday. The money will help the foundation to support programs like one the governor showcased in a visit earlier this year to Waverly, where the Pike County YMCA is offering teenagers who've seen abuse or addiction in their home lives transportation, counseling and a safe place for activities.

**AGRICULTURE**

The Ohio Expo Center & State Fair's Cardinal Hall will now be known as "Kasich Hall" following a dedication ceremony recognizing Gov. John Kasich for his contributions to the fairgrounds over his two terms in office which has included the allocation of \$67 million for capital expenditures.

## **ARTS, SPORTS AND ENTERTAINMENT**

The Ohio Arts Council (OAC) is now accepting applications for its TeachArtsOhio program for projects occurring during the 2019-20 school year. This newest arts learning program aims to expand learning opportunities through the arts and increase academic achievement through schools' collaboration with a professional artist in the classroom. Each school may apply for its own TeachArtsOhio grant, and grants cover the total cost of artist fees associated with hosting a resident teaching artist. Artists can be in the creative writing, dance, design, drama/theatre, media arts, music, visual arts or traditional arts areas.

## **FY18-19 BUDGET**

As a new General Assembly is sworn in and a new administration prepares to take the reins of state government, Ohio's revenues came in under estimates for the month of December -- the first time that has happened since FY19 began on July 1, 2018. However, Office of Budget and Management (OBM) Director Tim Keen told *Hannah News* that there is nothing in Monday's report that concerns him: "We are on plan and somewhat overperforming for tax receipts." December saw the monthly revenues miss the mark by 2.0 percent or \$38.2 million while the year-to-date total remains over estimates by 1.1 percent or \$128.7 million, according to OBM's preliminary figures.

## **CHILDREN/FAMILIES**

The Ohio Human Trafficking Task Force Wednesday issued its report on human trafficking prevention efforts and accomplishments by various state agencies, detailing what it characterized as a largely successful coordinated statewide response to the problem. Identified in the report are priorities and accomplishments in three main areas: prevention, protection and prosecution.

## **EDUCATION**

A Franklin County judge delayed this week's trial on dissolution of the defunct Electronic Classroom of Tomorrow (ECOT). According to the office of Common Pleas Judge Michael Holbrook, Educational Service Center of Lake Erie West, ECOT's sponsor, told the court it is still in the process of winding down the school. Lake Erie West filed a request Monday to vacate hearings set for this week. A final pre-trial hearing had been set for Tuesday, Jan. 8, and the trial was scheduled to begin Thursday. No new dates were set as of Tuesday morning, according to Holbrook's office.

## **ELECTIONS**

While the 132nd General Assembly had nearly 40 bills related to elections introduced over the course of the session, only three of those ultimately became law and just one was passed in the lame duck session. Gov. John Kasich signed HB41 (Pelanda) before Christmas after it became the only election bill to move through the busy end-of-year session. The bill became the vehicle for a number of election changes, first making changes to current law on challenges to voter registrations and election observers. Sponsor Rep. Dorothy Pelanda (R-Marysville) had said the bill would streamline the absentee voting process by treating in-person early voters more like Election Day voters.

Secretary of State Jon Husted Wednesday said that county boards of elections will be sending out notices to more than 275,000 voters who are in danger of being removed from the voter rolls under the state's supplemental process. The process, which removes voters from the statewide voter

registration database who do not vote for two federal election cycles and do not take any action when notified of their inactivity, was upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court last year.

## **EMPLOYMENT/UNEMPLOYMENT**

The nation added 312,000 jobs in December, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) announced Friday, while the unemployment rate went from 3.7 percent to 3.9 percent. According to BLS, the number of unemployed persons rose by 276,000 people to 6.3 million, though much of that can be attributed to more people joining the labor force.

## **ENERGY**

The U.S. oil and gas industry has effectively met the ever-increasing demand for energy use around the world while also working to reduce carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) emissions, American Petroleum Institute (API) President and CEO Mike Sommers said Tuesday. Speaking to reporters on a conference call ahead of his 2019 "State of American Energy" event in Washington D.C., Sommers said U.S. production of oil and gas is good for the economy, national security and the environment.

## **ENVIRONMENT**

The Ohio Environmental Protection Agency (Ohio EPA) has issued the last air and water permits necessary for the proposed ethane cracker plant in Belmont County to be constructed, but it's still unclear when or if PTT Global Chemical America (PTTGCA) and Daelim Industrial Company will pursue the project, estimated to cost between \$5 and \$10 billion.

Nearly \$3 million in grants is available for entities seeking to implement projects to reduce harmful algal blooms in Lake Erie, the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency (Ohio EPA) has announced. The agency is requesting proposals for projects to reduce nonpoint source pollutants such as nutrients, sediment and bacteria; to improve stream and riparian habitat; or to reverse the effects of stream hydromodification, Ohio EPA said. Proposals should be linked to critical areas identified in Ohio's watersheds such as projects that improve water quality in Ohio streams from nonpoint sources of pollution. Projects that measurably reduce nutrients, eliminate impairments, or restore impaired stream segments are more of a priority than general nonpoint source pollution prevention projects, the agency said.

The Ohio Air Quality Development Authority (OAQDA) approved clean air financing totaling up to \$1.6 million for one large Cincinnati area business and three small companies in three different counties in Ohio to help them become more energy efficient while preserving the quality of the state's air.

## **FEDERAL**

Suggesting that the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program could be an inroad to negotiation, U.S. Sen. Rob Portman (R-OH) said both Democrats and Republicans need to be willing to compromise if they want the current federal government shutdown to end. Portman emphasized that coming to a resolution on immigration and border security issues is the key to bringing the federal government back online.

Following President Donald Trump's televised address Tuesday night from the Oval Office on immigration and the federal government shutdown, responses rolled in from Gov. John Kasich, U.S. Sen. Sherrod Brown (D-OH), U.S. Sen. Rob Portman (R-OH) and U.S. Rep. Tim Ryan (D-Niles).

U.S. Sen. Sherrod Brown called on his Senate colleagues Wednesday to pass a spending plan and override the president's veto in order to reopen the federal government. Brown told reporters the Senate unanimously passed a spending plan in December by a voice vote, but that effort to keep the government open was stymied when President Trump did not sign the plan because it did not contain a border wall funding provision. Referring to Trump's speech on immigration Tuesday evening, Brown downplayed what Trump called an immigration "crisis," and instead called the government shutdown a "manufactured crisis" for government workers and contract employees who won't be performing their duties or receiving pay for the duration of the shutdown.

U.S. Rep. Dave Joyce (R-Twinsburg) will co-chair the Congressional Cannabis Caucus (CCC) in the 116th Congress, CCC founder and Co-Chair U.S. Rep. Earl Blumenauer (D-OR) announced Wednesday. Other CCC co-chairs include U.S. Reps. Don Young (R-AK) and Barbara Lee (D-CA).

## **GAMING/GAMBLING**

Ohio's four casinos ended 2018 with approximately \$18.5 million more in adjusted gross revenue than they made in 2017, according to data released by the Ohio Casino Control Commission. Casinos made \$837,482,101 in 2018, compared to \$818,979,250 in 2017.

## **GENERAL ASSEMBLY/STATEHOUSE**

Rep. Larry Householder (R-Glenford) Monday reclaimed the speaker's gavel during the first day of session, marking a rare split vote for leadership in what is usually a ceremonial vote confirming previous caucus votes and bringing to an end, for now, a bitter leadership battle that has played out over the past year in the House. Twenty-six Democrats joined with 26 Republicans in voting for Householder, giving him a 52 to 46 vote win over Smith, who was backed by 14 Democrats, including House Minority Leader Fred Strahorn (D-Dayton). The 26 Democrats voting for Householder included Reps. Boggs, Boyd, Brent, Brown, Cera, Crawley, Crossman, Denson, Galonski, Hicks-Hudson, Holmes, Howse, Leland, Lepore-Hagan, A. Miller, O'Brien, Robinson, Sheehy, Skindell, K. Smith, Sobbecki, Sweeney, Sykes, Upchurch, Weinstein and West. The 34 Republicans who voted for Smith included Reps. Arndt, Blessing, Brinkman, Carfagna, Cupp, Dean, Gavarone, Ginter, Green, Greenspan, Hambley, Hood, Hoops, Keller, Kick, Koehler, Lanese, Lang, LaTourette, Lipps, Manchester, G. Manning, McClain, Patton, Perales, Reineke, Riedel, Romanchuk, Ryan, Scherer, Seitz, R. Smith, Stein and Stoltzfus.

Late Tuesday afternoon, Speaker Larry Householder (R-Glenford) announced the appointment of Jonathon McGee as chief of staff and majority legal counsel for the Ohio House of Representatives. McGee, who started immediately, has most recently been executive director of the Ohio Cable Telecommunications Association. He replaces Shawn Kasych who resigned earlier on Tuesday.

The Legislature's upper chamber has remained a steady, dependable institution amid turmoil in other sections of state government recently, Senate President Larry Obhof (R-Medina) said during the first day of the 133rd General Assembly. Senate Minority Leader Kenny Yuko (D-Richmond Heights) said he and Obhof have proven it's possible for Democrats and Republicans to work together effectively, noting they are "role models" for how partisans should interact.

Senate President Larry Obhof (R-Medina) said Wednesday he expects to name committee chairs and announce priority legislation in the coming weeks, after senators have a chance to discuss matters at next week's caucus retreat. Obhof said priorities are likely to include continuation of regulatory reform discussions in the vein of last session's 132-SB293 (Peterson-McColley); Lake Erie and waterway protection measures being discussed by Sens. Bob Peterson (R-Sabina), Randy Gardner (R-Bowling Green) and Brian Hill (R-Zanesville); anti-trafficking policies pursued in the previous session by then-Sen. Gayle Manning (R-North Ridgeville); and criminal sentencing reform. The caucus retreat is scheduled for Wednesday and Thursday, Jan. 16 and 17.

In an era when national politics is often focused on personality over policy, most Americans might be surprised at what's going on in their state legislatures, the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) observes as it identified the top 10 issues it believes will gain the most attention in state legislatures in 2019. Those issues include the following: budget battles; education funding; Medicaid; opioid crisis; workforce; transportation; privacy and security; infrastructure; voting; and families. Runners up for inclusion in the top 10 list were housing; child welfare; occupational licensing; sexual harassment; prescription drugs; disasters; new technologies; sports betting; immigration policy; drinking water; marijuana policies; and veterans.

## GOVERNOR

Gov. John Kasich signed the following bills passed in the lame duck session over the past week:

- **SB214** (Terhar-Lehner) Excludes from the definition of public record under the Public Records Law any depiction by photograph, film, videotape, or digital, visual, or printed material of victims of crime under specified circumstances dealing with the victims' bodily privacy, excludes from that definition specified residential and familial information regarding county or multicounty corrections officers, prohibits female genital mutilation.

- **SB255** (McColley) Establishes a statewide policy on occupational regulation, allows an individual who has been convicted of a criminal offense to request a licensing authority to determine whether the individual is disqualified from receiving or holding a professional license based on conviction, requires standing committees of the General Assembly to periodically review occupational licensing boards regarding their sunset, requires the Legislative Service Commission to issue reports of occupational licensing bills and state regulation of occupations, requires the licensure of home inspectors, creates the Ohio Home Inspector Board to regulate the licensure and performance of home inspectors, requires realtors who recommend home inspectors to provide a list of home inspectors, and regulates the practice of makeup artistry.

- **SB265** (Dolan) Permits certain health insurers to provide payment or reimbursement for services lawfully provided by a pharmacist. Adopts requirements related to step therapy protocols, and recognizes pharmacist services in certain other laws.

- **HB66** (Young) Establishes the Subcommittee on Standards for Teacher Preparation of the Educator Standards Board, establishes the Undergraduate Mission Study Committee to evaluate each state university's efforts to secure participation in the undergraduate mission by its tenured faculty, qualifies public and private institutions of higher education as covered entities for cybersecurity program safe harbor, and requires a public school to notify the parent of a student who fails to arrive at school on time.

- **HB101** (Merrin) - Establishes provisions to be known as the "Epinephrine Accessibility Act" and makes other changes to the laws governing the State Board of Pharmacy.
- **HB139** (Perales-Keller) - Eliminates the public disclosure exemption for any permanently retained record 75 years after the date of its creation, with exceptions.
- **HB300** (Barnes) - Provides that any nondriver identification card that is issued to a resident of Ohio who is permanently or irreversibly disabled must be issued with an eight-year expiration date and exempts such cardholders who are also unemployed from the identification card fees.
- **HB341** (Huffman-Cera) Exempts personal information about judges from disclosure.
- **HB420** (Sykes, Boyd) Designates the month of November as Ohio Adoption Awareness Month, modifies the laws governing the Vision Professionals Board and Speech and Hearing Professionals Board, and revises an exception to the prohibition against a Medicaid provider employing persons ineligible for employment because of criminal records check requirements.
- **HB422** (Ginter-Rogers) Govern acquisitions of municipal waterworks and sewage systems.
- **HB425** (Antani-Craig) - Provides that specified portions of peace officers' body-worn camera or dashboard camera recordings and the infrastructure record of a public school are not public records for purposes of the Public Records Law, replaces expungement with sealing of ex parte protection orders and records under certain circumstances, clarifies the appellate process for the court's refusal to grant certain protection orders, and repeals the pilot program regarding the removal of sealed or expunged records from certain databases.
- **HB477** (Koehler) - Eliminates various provisions and programs related to the Department of Education and the operation of primary and secondary schools, revises the law on paraprofessional certification, and provides civil immunity regarding decisions not to procure mental health services for a suspended or expelled student.
- **HB511** (Lanese, Rogers) Makes changes to the laws governing the ages at which persons may marry.

Gov. John Kasich had no comment Thursday on the absence of former Ohio Bureau of Workers' Compensation (BWC) coin investor and Republican fundraiser Tom Noe from his final commutations and pardons of convicted criminals. Kasich issued a list of three commutations and nine pardons Wednesday after favorable recommendations by the Ohio Parole Board. The official date of clemency in all cases was Dec. 20, 2018.

Appointments made during the week include the following:

- Matthew P. Verbsky of West Liberty (Logan County) to the State Veterinary Medical Licensing Board for a term beginning Jan. 8, 2019 and ending Dec. 31, 2021.
- Napoleon A. Bell of Columbus (Franklin County) reappointed to the Ohio Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday Commission for a term beginning Jan. 8, 2019 and ending Dec. 30, 2021.

- Kacy R. Bullard of Columbus (Franklin County) and Tracey S. Monroe-Winbush of Youngstown (Mahoning County) to the Ohio Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday Commission for terms beginning Jan. 8, 2019 and ending Dec. 30, 2021.
- Gary W. Cates of West Chester (Butler County) reappointed to the Midwestern Higher Education Compact Commission for a term beginning Jan. 9, 2019 and ending Jan. 8, 2023.
- Timothy J. Cosgrove of Kirtland (Lake County) to the Capitol Square Review and Advisory Board for a term beginning Jan. 10, 2019 and ending April 22, 2020.
- Diane E. "Annie" Jones of Ostrander (Delaware County) and Nancy O'Connor of Akron (Summit County) reappointed to the State Veterinary Medical Licensing Board for terms beginning Jan. 10, 2019 and ending Dec. 31, 2021.
- Robert "Rob" Nichols of Upper Arlington (Franklin County) to the State Veterinary Medical Licensing Board for a term beginning Jan. 10, 2019 and ending Dec. 31, 2021.
- Barry J. Alexin of Westerville (Franklin County), G. Gary Kaster of McConnelsville (Morgan County), and William J. Siplivy of Stow (Summit County) reappointed to the Ohio Reclamation Forfeiture Fund Advisory Board for terms beginning Jan. 11, 2019 and ending Jan. 10, 2023.
- Chief William G. Brantingham of Winona (Columbiana County), Chief Michael H. Fitchet of Conneaut (Ashtabula County), Larry L. Lindrose, Jr. of Mentor (Lake County), J. Randal Van Dyne of Findlay (Hancock County), and Chief Fire Marshal David K. Whiting of Grove City (Franklin County) reappointed to the State Emergency Response Commission for terms beginning Jan. 14, 2019 and ending Jan. 13, 2021.
- Roger W. Berg of Carlsbad; Mark Donaghy of Dayton (Montgomery County); Emily E. Frascaroli, Meng of Grosse Ile, MI; Paul A. Hemmersbaugh of Potomac; James R. Keller of Rochester, MI; Vincent A. Lichtinger of Findlay (Hancock County); Charles R. Moses of Dublin (Franklin County); Cheryl Parker of Cincinnati (Hamilton County); Matthew Patton of Chicago, IL; Jon Poponea of Waterford, MI; Brett Roubinek of Westerville (Franklin County); and Matthew M. Thompson of Fort Mitchell, KY to the DriveOhio Expert Advisory Board for terms beginning Jan. 9, 2019 and continuing at the pleasure of the governor.
- James G. Kinnick Sr., of Youngstown (Mahoning County), William E. Murdock of Columbus (Franklin County), Eric S. Phillips of Marysville (Union County), Joanna M. Pinkerton of Circleville (Pickaway County), Michael Stevens of Dublin (Franklin County), Andrew B. Stone of Nelsonville (Athens County), and T. Michael Toole of Toledo (Lucas County) to the DriveOhio Government Advisory Board for terms beginning Jan. 9, 2019 and continuing at the pleasure of the governor.

## **GREAT LAKES**

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) should quickly implement a plan to prevent Asian carp from invading the Great Lakes, Attorney General Mike DeWine said Monday. In comments submitted to USACE, DeWine weighed in on the final report and plan for preventing nuisance species like Asian carp from moving from the Mississippi River basin to the Great Lakes. He said most, if not all, project funding should come from the federal government.

## **HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES**

Doctors at the Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center are now the first in the country to successfully implant a device that prevents knee pain and discomfort in patients with osteoarthritis. The Calypso Knee System allows patients to extend the life of their knee joints.

## **HIGHER EDUCATION**

The faculty union at Wright State University (WSU) announced that they filed a strike notice with the State Employee Relations Board on Monday, Jan. 7, arguing the "last best offer" provided by the university will damage the institution's quality of education. In November 2018, members of the American Association of University Professors at WSU (AAUP-WSU) voted to reject an independent fact finder's report that included unpaid furlough and limited control over health insurance benefits for faculty. The 10-day notice means the union could strike beginning Jan. 22.

The University of Toledo (UT) has named Karen Bjorkman, dean of UT's college of natural sciences and mathematics, as the interim provost and executive vice president for academic affairs. Her role in the position will begin Tuesday, Jan. 15.

Ohio State University (OSU) is merging two administrative units into one comprehensive office aimed at improving its student services, the university announced Wednesday. The institution's offices of enrollment services and undergraduate education will form the Office of Student Academic

Success (OSAS). The merger, previously announced in June 2018, will be led by Beth Hume, vice provost of student academic success and dean of undergraduate education.

## **LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR**

After leaving public office next week, Lt. Gov. Mary Taylor will become executive vice president and chief financial officer (CFO) of Welty Building Company, the construction firm announced Wednesday. Taylor's husband, Don Taylor, is president and chief executive officer (CEO) of the company.

## **LIQUOR/ALCOHOL**

In December, agents with the Ohio Investigative Unit (OIU) teamed up with Ohio Liquor Control (OHLQ), charging five people throughout Ohio after an investigation into secondary market liquor sales. Secondary market liquor sales often take place on websites, such as Craigslist and Facebook groups and Marketplace. In Ohio, consumers may only purchase spirituous liquor from authorized sources such as an OHLQ location, which are private businesses that sell the product on behalf of the state of Ohio, or permitted retail establishments, such as bars and restaurants.

The Ohio Department of Department of Commerce (DOC) has awarded nearly 800 Ohioans the opportunity to purchase one of a few select bottles of Kentucky bourbon from the Pappy Van Winkle or Buffalo Trace collection. Over 70,000 entered the lottery this year. The 2018 bottle lottery began Monday, Dec. 10 and ran through Friday, Dec. 21. Both bourbons are expensive due to the distillers' high production standards and the small quantity of batches that are distilled. The bourbons are then aged over years or decades.

## **LOBBYISTS**

The CJR Group announced Thursday the addition of Brittany Warner to its Columbus government affairs team. Warner previously worked as communications director on Gov.-elect Mike DeWine's campaign. The CJR Group also announced the hiring of Cierra Lynch in the Columbus office. Previously, Lynch coordinated multiple offices and led grassroots voter contact efforts for all statewide and regional Republican candidates as a regional field director for the Ohio Republican Party.

## **MARIJUANA**

The Ohio Department of Commerce (DOC) on Wednesday handed out 13 provisional licenses to medical marijuana processor applicants during its second round of awards. The department awarded 14 provisional licenses during its first round, and it can award up to 40 total. No processors have yet attained a certificate of operation.

The State Medical Board of Ohio's (SMBO's) Medical Marijuana Condition Expert Review Committee will consider six new qualifying conditions for medical marijuana treatment proposed by Ohioans. The committee voted to move forward nine of the 110 petitions received. They include three proposals for opioid use disorder, two proposals for autism spectrum disorder and one each for chronic anxiety disorder, depression and insomnia.

North Coast Testing Laboratories (NCTL) and the Hocking College Cannabis Medical Testing Laboratory both have received Ohio cultivator-grown cannabis for testing and could approve batches for patient consumption as soon as Monday, Jan. 14, representatives of both facilities told *Hannah News* on Thursday. Previously, NCTL spokesperson Joe Moorhead said his facility would not be ready to analyze marijuana until Monday, Feb. 4. Hocking College's lab just received its certificate of operation this week.

## **NATURAL RESOURCES**

Lake Erie anglers would be allowed to catch more fish in Spring 2020 if a new proposal from the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) Division of Wildlife is approved. Among other 2019-2020 hunting and fishing proposals made to the Ohio Wildlife Council this week, ODNR is suggesting an increase to the daily bag limit of walleye, sauger and saugeye in Lake Erie when Ohio's total allowable catch exceeds three million fish.

## **NEWS MEDIA**

The Ohio Legislative Correspondents Association (OLCA) Monday elected Jim Provance of the *Blade* as president for the 133rd General Assembly. He succeeds Jackie Borchardt, a reporter for the *Cincinnati Enquirer*, who becomes the immediate past president. Darrell Rowland of the *Columbus Dispatch* was elected vice president; *Hannah News*' Noah Blundo, treasurer; and Jessie Balmert of the *Cincinnati Enquirer*, secretary. Andy Chow of Ohio Public Radio was appointed the representative for radio and television.

## **PEOPLE**

Ty Higgins has been named director of media relations for the Ohio Farm Bureau, the organization announced Tuesday. For the last eight years, Higgins has been a farm broadcaster, writer and network director for Ohio AgNet and Ohio's Country Journal, where he has been involved in issues important to both farmers and the public. His 23-year career includes farm broadcasting at WRFD radio and the Agri Broadcasting Network. He was also an on-air personality for WHOK radio in Columbus.

Swing State Strategies announced the hiring of Jordan Ohler as vice president of communications and the promotion of Colton Henson to vice president of public affairs.

## **SECRETARY OF STATE**

Ohio Secretary of State Jon Husted Friday announced that with 125,204 new business filings, 2018 was a record-breaking year for new businesses formed in the Buckeye State. Husted's office said the new mark is the ninth consecutive year the state has seen a record number of new entities choose Ohio as the place they want to do business. The previous record was set in 2017, when 117,429 new businesses registered with the secretary of state's office.

## **STATE GOVERNMENT**

The Office of Budget and Management (OBM) does not foresee big disruptions looming for state programs as a result of the federal government shutdown. "OBM is monitoring the shutdown situation in Washington and is working with state agencies to assess potential impacts. OBM is working with affected state agencies to manage known impacts on their programs and implement strategies to limit any impact on services. We believe that most cuts will not be felt immediately at the program level, so there is time plan our response in a considered, systematic way -- based on the facts. Given Ohio's current fiscal good health, it is our general sense that any challenges presented by this shutdown can be successfully managed," agency spokesman John Charlton said in an email Friday.

## **TECHNOLOGY**

A new report from personal finance website WalletHub named three Ohio cities among the nation's top 25 metro areas for Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) professionals. The top Ohio city was Cincinnati, the 10th best metro area for STEM professionals in the nation, followed by Columbus, at 12th, and Dayton, at 22nd. Also ranked on the list were Cleveland, at 43rd; Youngstown, at 66th; Akron, at 72nd; and Toledo, at 91st.

## **TRANSITION**

Westerville Police Chief Joseph Morbitzer will lead the Bureau of Criminal Investigation (BCI) as superintendent, Attorney General-elect Dave Yost announced Friday. Morbitzer is set to resign Friday, Jan 25 to take the helm of the investigative agency, a division of the attorney general's office that runs the state crime lab and helps with crime scene investigation. BCI has approximately 450 employees.

The five incoming statewide officeholders have announced their inaugural event schedules, with some choosing to take the official oath of office close to home. Meanwhile, three new officeholders - Treasurer-elect Robert Sprague, Secretary of State-elect Frank LaRose, and Auditor-elect Keith Faber -- are holding a joint reception on Monday, Jan. 14, the first day of their new jobs.

Office of Budget and Management (OBM) Director Tim Keen is heading back to the auditor's office, Auditor-elect Keith Faber (R-Celina) announced Monday, naming Keen senior adviser and chief financial officer. It's Keen's second move from state budget director to senior adviser for the auditor; he joined former Auditor Mary Taylor's staff in 2007 after serving as OBM director in the Taft administration. In addition, Faber named Tom Ruebel as director of government relations; Alex Bilchak as deputy chief of staff; Allie Dumski as press secretary; and James Coyne as director of regional liaisons.

Gov.-elect Mike DeWine and Lt. Gov.-elect Jon Husted defined Husted's roles in the incoming administration: leading workforce development efforts as well as heading up InnovateOhio, a signature campaign proposal that the two said would integrate new technology into state government. DeWine announced that Husted would be the director of InnovateOhio as well as lead the Governor's Office of Workforce Transformation. Husted's office will also continue to oversee the efforts of the Common Sense Initiative (CSI), which is overseen by Husted's predecessor, Lt. Gov. Mary Taylor.

Sen. Randy Gardner (R-Bowling Green) becomes the new chancellor of higher education and former Rep. Dorothy Pelanda becomes the new director of agriculture according to Gov.-elect Mike DeWine. Thursday he announced these and the following other cabinet appointments: Ursel McElroy as director of aging; Jeff Davis as director of developmental disabilities; Laurie Stevenson as director of Ohio EPA; Jillian Froment remains director of insurance; Kimberly Hall as the director of job and family services; Maureen Corcoran as director of Medicaid; Lori Criss as director of mental health and addiction services; Jack Marchbanks as director of transportation; Stephanie McCloud as Bureau of Workers' Compensation administrator; Ryan Gies as director of youth services; and Maj. Gen. (Ret.) Deborah Ashenhurst as director of veteran services. In addition, Andy Wilson is the senior adviser for criminal justice policy.

A number of conservative and pro-life activists recently sent a letter to Treasurer-elect Robert Sprague demanding Sprague not hire former Sen. Bill Beagle after Beagle failed to vote to override Gov. John Kasich's veto on 132-HB258 (Hagan-Hood), the heartbeat bill. Beagle had voted for the bill when it passed the Senate but voted against overriding the veto during a post-holiday session. The veto-override effort fell just one vote short in the Senate of succeeding.

## **UTILITIES**

Public Utilities Commission of Ohio (PUCO) staff say the wholesale power market encompassing the state is currently oversaturated and more than adequate to handle consumers' electric needs without American Electric Power (AEP) of Ohio's 900 megawatts of proposed renewable energy. Staff argue that forcing all AEP customers to subsidize its wind and solar projects would jeopardize dozens of competitive suppliers that are already satisfying consumers' renewable demands. PUCO staff filed comments this week in AEP's ongoing dispute with the Ohio Consumers' Counsel (OCC), Ohio Manufacturers' Association (OMA), Ohio Coal Association, and Industrial Energy Users-Ohio, among other opponents of the utility's proposed non-bypassable bill rider supporting 500 megawatts of wind and 400 megawatts of solar energy.

**LEGISLATIVE ACTIVITY:**

*No legislative activity to report.*