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RH RESOURCES

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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

The federal Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) will sponsor another National Prescription Drug Take Back Day on Saturday, Oct. 27, to allow safe disposal of leftover medications. An earlier "take back day" held in April saw 4,683 law enforcement agencies participate with 5,842 collection sites. A total of 949,046 pounds or 474.5 tons of discarded drugs were collected across the country. Of that, 40,509 pounds was collected in Ohio. Saturday, the hours run from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Locations where people can take old/unused or other unneeded prescription drugs to be dropped off can be found online at <https://tinyurl.com/y9lzlkao>.

AGRICULTURE

David Daniels was terminated from his position as director of the Ohio Department of Agriculture (ODAg) on Friday, Oct. 19, according to a letter from Gov. John Kasich. Daniels told *Hannah*

News in a phone interview on Monday he heard his firing was "water quality-related" by reading a Cleveland.com article. Kasich appointed Tim Derickson as the interim director. Derickson has been serving as assistant director of the department. Kasich said Tuesday he wanted someone "fully on board" with his strong feelings about the need to protect Lake Erie. Following Daniels' firing, Deputy Director Janelle Mead and ODAg Chief Counsel Dustin Calhoun also submitted letters of resignation.

ATTORNEY GENERAL

Attorney General Mike DeWine opened the final annual Law Enforcement Conference of his tenure Thursday, telling the hundreds of safety officials who convened in Columbus that he had striven for eight years to help them achieve their mission of safeguarding Ohioans. DeWine also announced two new resources for law enforcement -- expansion of the Ohio Peace Officer Training Academy training village, and creation of a new best practices manual for property and evidence rooms, the latter a joint project with Auditor Dave Yost.

Law enforcement leaders attended a management workshop in diversity Thursday as part of a long schedule of breakout sessions at the Ohio Attorney General's 2018 Law Enforcement Conference in Columbus. Participants acknowledged a general lack of dedicated staff for diversity and inclusion programs but said they're working to recruit a broader workforce and to educate existing employees in community-police relations

BALLOT ISSUES

Former Ohio Supreme Court Justice William O'Neill, who earlier this year ran for governor in the Democratic primary, endorsed Monday the passage of Issue 1, a proposed constitutional amendment meant to prioritize treatment over incarceration for some drug crimes. In a statement accompanying an endorsement editorial, O'Neill also raised questions about the conduct of his former colleague, Chief Justice Maureen O'Connor, one of the most prominent critics of Issue 1.

EDUCATION

The Ohio 8 Coalition, representing teachers and administrators in the state's largest urban school districts, is urging extension of graduation flexibility for an additional three years, mirroring a recommendation approved by a State Board of Education committee this week. Also this week, the Board of Governors for the Columbus Education Association voted unanimously to adopt a resolution calling for extension through 2021.

Rep. Niraj Antani (R-Miamisburg) recently introduced HB738 to require the Ohio Facilities Construction Commission (OFCC) and the Department of Education (ODE) to study the status of school buildings regarding air conditioning, accessibility, school safety "and any other amenity that the commission and the department determine should be available in all school buildings." The bill also requires that once the study is completed, that 25 percent of future school construction money be dedicated to air conditioning, disability accessibility, safety "and any other amenity ..."

A new advisory panel gathered for the first time Tuesday to discuss its assignment to recommend improvements to Ohio's education database, which gathers information for uses including state report cards, school finance, truancy and many others. The Education Management Information System (EMIS) Advisory Council is made up of Ohio Department of Education (ODE) staff and

representatives of school districts and other entities that regularly interact with the database. It replaces the EMIS Advisory Board, which was convened by lawmakers and included State Board of Education members as well as representatives of various education groups.

A total of 100 Ohio public school programs and projects will be featured at the Ohio School Boards Association (OSBA) Student Achievement Fair at its 2018 Capital Conference and Trade Show. Among those being showcased are fifth-graders who use a 3-D printer to design prosthetic hands for children in need and a bell choir whose members are high school students with disabilities.

The Ohio Supreme Court said Wednesday it will consider whether the new, more powerful nature of academic distress commissions violates constitutional protections for local control, and whether lawmakers took improper shortcuts in empowering the commissions. Justices announced they'll accept *Youngstown City School District Board of Education v. State of Ohio* and review the decisions of the 10th District Court of Appeals and Franklin County Common Pleas Court, which both ruled against Youngstown school officials in their bid to upend the Youngstown Academic Distress Commission.

In its final meeting Wednesday evening, the State Board of Education (SBOE) Report Card Workgroup recommended eliminating the school district report card "A through F" rating scale and replacing it with an online dashboard compliant with the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). The recommendation will be heard before the SBOE Accountability and Continuous Improvement Committee at a Nov. 15 meeting.

ELECTIONS

Ohio Secretary of State Jon Husted recently awarded four precinct election officials (PEOs) with Red Carpet Awards for their dedication to running good elections in their communities. The honorees include John Rybka (Democrat) and Larry Fraker (Republican) from Delaware County, Mary Roederer (Democrat) from Guernsey County, and April Kamentz (Republican) from Warren County.

ELECTIONS 2018

Ohio state auditor candidates Rep. Keith Faber (R-Celina) and former U.S. Rep. Zack Space (D-Dover) offered their differing philosophies on the purpose of the office while trading barbs during Friday's auditor's debate hosted at Zane State College in Zanesville and moderated by *Cleveland Plain Dealer* reporter Jeremy Pelzer.

The 15th Congressional District saw its first debate Friday as U.S. Rep. Steve Stivers (R-Hilliard) and Democratic challenger Rick Neal faced off in a "community conversation" of sorts in the state capital. Stivers, completing his fourth term after serving in the Ohio Senate, and Neal, an international development professional and member of the Ohio Democratic Party Executive Committee, fielded questions ranging from entitlements to immigration to campaign finance.

Republican state Auditor Dave Yost and former U.S. Attorney Steve Dettelbach faced off in their first and only scheduled debate Monday, as the Democrat accused Yost of being a career politician and the latter charged Dettelbach with corresponding partisanship. Their answers at the City Club of Cleveland strayed from questions on the Electronic Classroom of Tomorrow (ECOT), criminal

justice reform, cyber-security and other policy issues to assorted attacks designed to expose each other's perceived weaknesses.

U.S. Sen Sherrod Brown (D-OH) and his challenger, U.S. Rep. Jim Renacci (R-Wadsworth), met Saturday in Columbus for their second of three planned debates. The discussion consisted predominantly of attacks, as Brown harped on the benefit to the wealthy and powerful from Renacci's vote for federal tax legislation, and Renacci described Brown as a poster child for term limits.

Friends of Sherrod Brown Monday launched "Educators for Sherrod," a coalition of teachers, administrators and other educators who are working to re-elect U.S. Sen. Sherrod Brown (D-OH).

Former Kansas Gov. and U.S. Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Kathleen Sebelius stopped in Columbus Monday to stump for Democrat Richard Cordray's gubernatorial campaign, accusing Republican opponent and Ohio Attorney General Mike DeWine of duplicity in having originally opposed the Affordable Care Act (ACA) and now claiming support for preexisting conditions and "reformed" Medicaid expansion.

The Republican and Democratic candidates for the offices of treasurer and secretary of state spent Monday evening answering voter-submitted questions during a forum at Otterbein University. During the relatively cordial affair, secretary of state candidates Sen. Frank LaRose (R-Copley) and Rep. Kathleen Clyde (D-Kent) both discussed their affinity for bipartisanship and their commitment to civility in politics. Treasurer candidates Rep. Robert Sprague (R-Findlay) and Democratic opponent Rob Richardson of Cincinnati both emphasized their financial experience during their time on stage.

Secretary of State Jon Husted announced that as of Friday, Oct. 19, an estimated 1,053,697 absentee ballots had been requested and 332,663 cast statewide. This includes more than 8,620 ballot requests from military and overseas voters, whose absentee ballots started going out on Saturday, Sept. 22, of which nearly 2,160 have been cast. Ballots for all other voters started going out on Oct. 10 and more than 330,000 have been cast by mail and in person.

The major party gubernatorial campaigns raised and spent more than \$10 million apiece from July through mid-October, with Democrat Richard Cordray bringing in more money but Republican Mike DeWine showing a heftier bank account in the home stretch, in large part because of a \$3 million personal loan to his campaign. DeWine, the attorney general, and running mate Jon Husted, the secretary of state, raised almost \$1.3 million, spent \$11.8 million and reported nearly \$6.1 million on hand -- \$3 million of it loaned by DeWine this week. Cordray, the former attorney general, and running mate Betty Sutton, a former member of Congress, raised \$1.6 million, spent close to \$10 million and had more than \$1.1 million on hand. Fundraising was competitive among other statewide candidates, but Republican legislative caucuses led their Democratic counterparts by substantial margins.

The full field of major and minor party candidates for state auditor spoke Wednesday night on topics including higher education costs, gerrymandering and civility in government at a New Albany election forum that also featured legislative and congressional candidates. Bob Kendrick of Columbus TV news affiliates ABC6 and FOX28 moderated the discussions for the evening. Democrat Zack Space, a former U.S. representative, and Republican Rep. Keith Faber (R-Celina), former Ohio Senate president, were joined by Libertarian candidate Robert Coogan for the forum.

Health care is the "defining" issue in their races, Democratic gubernatorial and attorney general candidates Rich Cordray and Steve Dettelbach told reporters Thursday, and they stand apart from their Republican opponents, current Attorney General Mike DeWine and Auditor Dave Yost, by having protected those with pre-existing conditions.

Launching a bus tour of their own with a stop at Columbus' Strongwater bar, statewide Republican candidates told supporters and reporters that they can make the state even more prosperous than it is now, while Democratic opponents would represent a step back. Many of the candidates offered similar comments to those given at the Ohio Republican Party's state dinner in August.

The following endorsements were made over the week:

- The Irvine for Governor campaign announced the endorsement by Republican political consultant Roger Stone of Libertarian Travis Irvine for governor.

- The Yes on Issue 1 campaign reports that Equality Ohio supports passage of the issue.

- The Ohio Association of Public Safety Directors opposes passage of Issue 1.

- The Cleveland Plain Dealer endorsed Kathleen Clyde for secretary of state.

- The Akron Beacon Journal endorsed Betsy Rader for the 14th U.S. House District seat.

- Crain's Cleveland Business endorsed Sherrod Brown for re-election to the U.S. Senate.

- The Youngstown Vindicator endorsed the re-election of Sherrod Brown to the U.S. Senate.

- Associated Builders and Contractors (ABC) of Ohio endorsed the following: No on **State Issue 1. Governor and lieutenant governor** - Mike DeWine and Jon Husted. **Attorney general** - Dave Yost. **Auditor** - Keith Faber. **Treasurer** - Robert Sprague. **Secretary of state** - no endorsed candidate. **U.S. Senate** - Jim Renacci. **U.S. Congress** - Dist. 1 Steve Chabot, Dist. 4 Jim Jordan, Dist. 5 Bob Latta, Dist. 6 Bill Johnson, Dist. 7 Bob Gibbs, Dist. 8 Warren Davidson and Dist. 15 Steve Stivers. **Ohio Supreme Court** - Mary DeGenaro and Craig Baldwin. **Ohio House of Representatives** - Dist. 1 Scott Wiggam, Dist. 2 Mark Romanchuk, Dist. 17 John Rush, Dist. 19 Tim Barhorst, Dist. 21 Stu Harris, Dist. 24 Eric

Yassenoff, Dist. 27 Tom Brinkman, Dist. 30 Bill Seitz, Dist. 38 Bill Roemer, Dist. 40 Phil Plummer, Dist. 41 Jim Butler, Dist. 42 Niraj Antani, Dist. 43 J. Todd Smith, Dist. 47 Derek Merrin, Dist. 50 Reginald Stolfus, Dist. 51 Sara Carruthers, Dist. 52 George Lang, Dist. 53 Candice Keller, Dist. 54 Paul Zeltwanger, Dist. 62 Scott Lipps, Dist. 65 John Becker, Dist. 67 Kris Jordan, Dist. 69 Steve Hambley, Dist. 73 Rick Perales, Dist. 74 Bill Dean, Dist. 77 Tim Schaffer, Dist. 78 Ron Hood, Dist. 79 Kyle Koehler, Dist. 80 Jenna Powell, Dist. 82 Craig Riedel, Dist. 83 Jon Cross, Dist. 84 Susan Manchester, Dist. 85 Nino Vitale, Dist. 86 Tracy Richardson, Dist. 88 Bill Reineke, Dist. 91 Shane Wilkin, Dist. 93 Ryan Smith and Dist. 98 Brett Hillyer. **Ohio Senate** - Dist. 1 Rob McColley, Dist. 5 Steve Huffman, Dist. 7 Steve Wilson, Dist. 17 Bob Peterson, Dist. 19 Andy Brenner, Dist. 27 Kristina Roegner and Dist. 29 Kirk Schuring.

EMPLOYMENT/UNEMPLOYMENT

Ohio nonfarm employment reached a record high of 5,638,900, the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) reported Friday, with spokesman Bret Crow saying the record is "a positive indicator that Ohio's economy is continuing its strong trajectory upward." The latest jobs report also showed that Ohio added jobs at a higher rate than the U.S. both from September 2017 to September 2018 and through 2018 so far, while also seeing average weekly earnings grow since 2011 at a higher rate than the nation. The unemployment rate remained at 4.6 percent, the same as August and July, and the record high in jobs was achieved through the addition of 4,300 jobs over August's revised total of 5,634,600.

The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) and U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) both recently released mobile apps offering information on labor markets, according to separate announcements by the two organizations. The two were developed independently, ODJFS spokesman Bret Crow told *Hannah News*, with the BLS app offering a "snapshot of occupational employment and wages for states and metro areas." The state app, release by ODJFS' Bureau of Labor Market Information, offers that area of detail along with historical trends and visualization.

ENVIRONMENT

The Ohio Environmental Protection Agency (Ohio EPA) has selected 21 Volkswagen (VW) Mitigation Grant recipients for projects geared toward reducing nitrogen oxide (NOx) emissions from diesel vehicles and equipment.

FEDERAL

The federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) said this week that it has started mailing new identification cards to Medicare recipients in Ohio and Kentucky, Louisiana, Michigan, Mississippi, Missouri, Puerto Rico, Tennessee and the Virgin Islands -- the seventh and final wave of the national rollout of the new cards. A total of 34 states, the District of Columbia and three territories have already received their cards. Wave 7 is the final group to receive the new cards, which were triggered by the CMS decision to remove Social Security numbers (SSN) from all Medicare cards by April 2019.

If Congress fails to renew the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), it could hurt the Hopewell Ceremonial Earthworks' chances of being named a World Heritage Site, Ohio Environmental Council (OEC) Public Lands Director Nathan Johnson said Wednesday.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY/STATEHOUSE

Senate President Larry Obhof (R-Medina) identified legislation on energy standards and regulatory reform as priorities for the lame duck session, adding that he plans to meet with House Speaker Ryan Smith (R-Bidwell) to discuss plans for the post-election session in the near future.

The Capitol Square Review and Advisory Board (CSRAB) reports that the new sliding door installed at the south garage entrance to the Ohio Statehouse operates differently. For individuals with after-hours access, the card reader is mounted on the door frame at the far right while facing the door. To access the door, swipe the card and then walk toward the opening; the card reader does not open the door, the motion sensor reading movement after a valid card swipe opens the door.

Rep. Christina Hagan (R-Alliance) posted on her Facebook page that she and her husband, Adam Nemeth, welcomed twin boys -- Colton John and Wyatt Gregory -- on Wednesday, Oct. 17.

GOVERNOR

Gov. John Kasich signed two bills into law Tuesday: HB 353 (Reineke), regarding unclaimed funds; and HB 405 (Perales), which creates a criminal offense of counterfeiting.

Gov. John Kasich on Tuesday announced the appointment of Renee M. DiSalvo of Youngstown (Mahoning County) to serve as a judge on the Youngstown Municipal Court. DiSalvo will assume office on Monday, Nov. 5 to complete the remainder of the unexpired term ending Jan. 1, 2020 and must run in the November 2019 election to retain the seat for the full term commencing Jan. 2, 2020. DiSalvo is replacing Judge Elizabeth A. Kobly, who resigned.

While he qualified his comments as "an observation" not a personal attack, Gov. John Kasich said he considers President Donald Trump "simply incapable" of uniting the nation Thursday on CNN. Kasich's comments came amid multiple days of suspected pipe bombs being mailed to Democratic figures and to CNN's New York headquarters.

Appointments made during the week include the following:

- Joseph W. Mazur of Peninsula (Summit County) to the TourismOhio Advisory Board for a term beginning Oct. 19, 2018 and ending Sept. 27, 2021.
- Thomas E. Zitter of Fort Recovery (Mercer County) reappointed to the Ohio Rail Development Commission for a term beginning Oct. 21, 2018 and ending Oct. 20, 2024.
- Rosaire Ifedi of Columbus (Franklin County), Abass M. Bangura of Reynoldsburg, (Franklin County), and Tariq Mohamed of New Albany (Franklin County) reappointed to the New African Immigrants Commission for terms beginning Oct. 19, 2018 and ending Oct. 7, 2021.
- David J. Johnson of Bay Village (Cuyahoga County) to the Northeast Ohio Medical University Board of Trustees for a term beginning Oct. 19, 2018 and ending June 29, 2020.
- Kathryn Bartter Arnold of Columbus (Franklin County) reappointed to the Great Lakes Protection Fund Board for a term beginning Oct. 19, 2018 and ending Oct. 10, 2020.
- David E. Prentice of Akron (Summit County) and Deborah A. Lantman of Milford (Clermont County) reappointed to the Industrial Commission Nominating Council for terms beginning Oct. 20, 2018 and ending Oct. 20, 2022.
- Robert K. Schmitz of Bexley (Franklin County) reappointed to the Industrial Commission Nominating Council for a term beginning Oct. 20, 2018 and ending Oct. 20, 2020.
- Michael G. Verich of Warren (Trumbull County) reappointed to the Environmental Review Appeals Commission for a term beginning Oct. 23, 2018 and ending Oct. 22, 2024.
- Solomon Jackson of Ostrander (Delaware County) reappointed to the Ohio Rail Development Commission for a term beginning Oct. 24, 2018 and ending Oct. 20, 2024.

- Joseph F. Denk of Fairview Park (Cuyahoga County) reappointed to the Board of Building Standards for a term beginning Oct. 24, 2018 and ending Oct. 13, 2022.

- Julienne R. Cromwell of Milford (Clermont County) and Gregory S. Barney of Tipp City (Montgomery County) to the Board of Building Standards for terms beginning Oct. 24, 2018 and ending Oct. 13, 2022.

- Linda Paz Lowes of Columbus (Franklin County) to the Ohio Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy and Athletic Trainers Board for a term beginning Oct. 25, 2018 and ending Aug. 27, 2021.

- Kari E. Pfeifer of Crestline (Crawford County) to the Ohio War Orphans Scholarship Board for a term beginning Oct. 25, 2018 and ending Dec. 31, 2020.

HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

A recent report from health care advocacy nonprofit Families USA posited that health outcomes for "working class" women, which the report defined as women with a high school education or lower, are considerably worse than health outcomes for college-educated men. Because these differences transcended racial lines, the authors argued that the findings were a unifying measure for people of different backgrounds during a time of divisive rhetoric; however, the authors also stated that health outcomes were sometimes worse for people of color.

A new survey of more than 3,500 physicians working in hospital emergency departments around the country shows that violence is rising, harming physicians, staff and patients. The data was presented Tuesday at the American College of Emergency Physicians' (ACEP) 2018 Scientific Assembly. The survey was conducted by Marketing General Incorporated via email in Aug. 2018. Ohio had the sixth highest response rate, with 168 physicians responding out of 3,539 total.

Calling the report that will be coming out of the meetings of the Managed Long-Term Services and Supports (MLTSS) Study Committee a "resource document" for the next General Assembly and governor, co-chair Rep. Mark Romanchuk (R-Mansfield) told *Hannah News* it will help decide how the state should proceed on the question of moving long-term services into the managed care system.

INSURANCE

In order to help fill the Ohio insurance industry's projected 29,000 job openings by 2024, the Ohio Insurance Institute (OII) will offer a \$100 online workplace readiness course for individuals seeking to enter the field, OII President Dean Fadel announced with Gov. John Kasich on Tuesday. Joined by other Ohio insurance industry leaders in the Statehouse Cabinet Room, Fadel said most of those job openings will not require a college degree.

JUDICIAL

The Ohio Supreme Court announced Monday that it is accepting public comment until Wednesday, Nov. 21 on a proposed amendment to "generally" prohibit filming and videotaping of jurors or prospective jurors.

The Ohio Supreme Court has announced a Thursday, Nov. 1 effective date for an amendment to the Rules for the Government of the Bar of Ohio concerning attorney resignation and permanent retirement.

MARIJUANA

While it has faced delays, medical marijuana will be available to Ohioans in the near future and that opens issues for employers, attorney Jonathan Downes of Zashin & Rich told attendees of the Ohio Council of Behavioral Health and Family Services Providers' Friday conference session on "Medical Marijuana and the Workplace." Illicit drug use, including medical marijuana prohibited by federal law, can have "significant consequences" for employers whether it is on- or off-the-job, Downes said. These include lost productivity, absenteeism, low morale, workplace accidents and injuries, exceptions to liability insurance coverage and liability for adverse employment actions taken in connection with marijuana use.

MILITARY AFFAIRS

The Ohio National Guard (ONG) Monday entered into a joint memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the U.S. Coast Guard's Research and Development Center (RDC), the first signed by the RDC and a state national guard. It will allow the two to work together on cyber efforts, according to an ONG press release. ONG spokeswoman Stephanie Beougher said these efforts will include research and development, testing and engagement in exercises, including through the guard's new cyber range.

NATURAL RESOURCES

The Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) recently hosted 20 disabled American veterans from Ohio for a guided archery hunt at Zaleski State Forest and Lake Hope State Park.

The Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) announced Wednesday that the Hocking Hills Dining Lodge, which burned down in late 2016, will soon be replaced with an improved facility. "After the Hocking Hills Dining Lodge burned down, visitors to Ohio's flagship state park have been clamoring for information on the future status of the lodge," ODNR said in a news release. "The former day lodge and dining hall will be replaced with an updated facility that will include overnight lodging, a conference center, dining and day-use accommodations."

PUBLIC SAFETY

The Ohio State Highway Patrol (OSHP) reports that the 6-State Trooper Project, of which it is part, focused on speed, safety belt and OVI enforcement on Interstate 70 this past weekend, Friday Oct. 12 through Sunday, Oct. 14. The high-visibility enforcement also included the Indiana State Police and the Pennsylvania State Police. During the enforcement initiative, OSHP issued 510 speed and 77 safety belt citations, and made 11 OVI (operating a vehicle impaired) arrests. Combined, the three agencies accounted for 736 speed and 87 safety belt citations, and 14 DUI/OVI arrests over the weekend.

STATE GOVERNMENT

The Ohio Facilities Construction Commission (OFCC) received its "2018 Executive Director's Report" Thursday, which provided a broad overview of its activities over the past year, highlighting the increase in projects being completed on-time and on-budget. Commission staff member Jeff Westhoven informed the body that 88.9 percent of projects were on or under budgets, 77.8 percent of projects were on or ahead of schedule and 100 percent of agency facilities have been condition assessed within the past fiscal year, among other positive indicators.

TECHNOLOGY

Claiming the "heavy hand" of government regulations is not needed, Gov. John Kasich said companies should take part in "inclusive capitalism" and, when developing new technology, consider the implications of how it could be used, during keynote remarks at the "Devol's Dance" summit Tuesday. The event, which brought leaders in robotics, artificial intelligence (AI) and automation fields to the Columbus College of Art and Design, featured Kasich discussing "public policy in a machine state" with Axios Technology Editor Dan Primack.

TRANSPORTATION/INFRASTRUCTURE

The Ohio Turnpike and Infrastructure Commission (OTIC) announced Monday it would be working with Electrify America to provide electric vehicle (EV) charging stations along the Ohio Turnpike for the first time. OTIC Executive Director Randy Cole said charging stations will be placed at the Wyandot and Blue Heron Service Plazas in Genoa and at the Indian Meadow and Tiffin River Service Plazas in West Unity, with the locations based on projections of where demand will be most significant in the near future. They are expected to be available in the first quarter of 2019.

The Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) and its public-private partnership DriveOhio have worked with local governments on making U.S. 33 a smart corridor, and on Monday the city of Dublin entered a memorandum of agreement (MoA) to pursue future testing of autonomous vehicles within the city, though there is no set timetable for when that would occur.

UTILITIES

A busy Public Utilities Commission of Ohio (PUCO) moved on a series of major policy issues Wednesday, ordering regulated utilities to comply with its 2018 tax mandate by filing applications to reduce rates under the federal Tax Cuts and Jobs Act (TCJA); establishing three separate dockets for a new PowerForward Collaborative; and awarding local authorities a quarter million dollars in hazardous material training grants, among other matters including submetering and electric auction results.

WORKERS' COMPENSATION

The Ohio Bureau of Workers' Compensation (BWC) announced Friday that 31 Ohio fire departments will be awarded funds from the Firefighter Exposure to Environmental Elements Grant Program totaling \$315,769. The grants will help purchase safety gear, exhaust systems and specialized washing machines to help protect firefighters from carcinogens and other harmful elements. The program was originally funded at \$2 million annually and was increased due to heavy demand, with more than \$5.1 million distributed through 496 grants.

Fresh off Senate Judiciary Committee hearings on her nomination to the U.S. District Court, Ohio Bureau of Workers' Compensation (BWC) Administrator/CEO Sarah Morrison told her board of directors Thursday the agency is taking steps to raise participation in the workplace health and wellness program announced in January. She said, "Better You, Better Ohio!" has reached the 1,800 mark in its first-year goal of 5,000 enrollees.

LEGISLATIVE ACTIVITY:

SENATE:

No legislative activity to report.

HOUSE:

No legislative activity to report.