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RH RESOURCES

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Week in Review

August 24, 2018

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

While most Ohioans believe opioid addiction is a serious problem in the state, a relatively small percentage think it's a serious problem for their own families, according to research from Nationwide Insurance. Speaking during a roundtable on the opioid epidemic at the Ohio Farm Bureau Federation's (OFBF) offices in Columbus, Nationwide Insurance Vice President of Sponsor Relations Devin Furhman said 66 percent of survey respondents said opioid abuse is a serious problem in Ohio. However, only 19 percent said opioids are a serious problem for their family.

U.S. Sen. Rob Portman (R-OH) announced the distribution of \$26 million in federal funds to Ohio alcohol, drug and mental health (ADAMH) boards to fight the opioid epidemic. The funds came from the 21st Century CURES law enacted in December 2016. Ohio also received \$26 million for the same purpose from CURES in 2017.

The U.S. State Department's head of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement said Tuesday that federal officials are making progress with Chinese authorities in cracking down on illicit fentanyl.

shipments to the United States, and they're getting some help from the Ohio State Highway Patrol (OSHP). Deputy Assistant Secretary James Walsh addressed a capital-area gathering hosted by the Columbus Council on World Affairs and the Columbus Metropolitan Club. Entitled "The Global Dimensions of Ohio's Opioid Crisis," the talk ranged from synthetic narcotics to marijuana to the dark net.

Attorney General Mike DeWine announced the award Wednesday of more than \$3 million in grants to law enforcement agencies across the state for drug use prevention education programs in public schools, led by \$115,000 to the Franklin County Sheriff's Office. A total of 152 sheriffs' offices and police departments will participate in \$3,098,808 in Drug Use Prevention Grant funds, which must be used to establish or maintain drug abuse prevention education and awareness programs for students during the 2018-2019 school year.

AGING

The Ohio Department of Aging is seeking community partners to celebrate "Falls Prevention Awareness Day" on Friday, Sept. 21, by hosting a local "10 Million Steps to Prevent Falls" event. Because walking and other regular exercise are among the best activities older adults can do to lower their risk of a life-altering fall, the department's STEADY U Ohio initiative aims to have at least 4,000 Ohioans take a one-mile walk to raise awareness and promote education about falls prevention. September is "Falls Prevention Awareness Month."

ATTORNEY GENERAL

Attorney General Mike DeWine joined a bipartisan group of 52 state and territorial attorneys general Thursday in urging Congress to help end the opioid epidemic and close a loophole that allows fentanyl traffickers to dodge law enforcement with ever-evolving variations on the deadly drug. The letter to U.S. House and Senate majority and minority leaders supports "swift passage" of S1553 (Johnson) and HR4922 (Sensenbrenner), the Stopping Overdoses of Fentanyl Analogues (SOFA) Act, to eliminate a current loophole that keeps the statutory schedule of controlled substance one step behind illegal manufacturers of fentanyl derivatives. The law would allow the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) to schedule all newly-modified analogues to make them illegal as soon as they are manufactured.

BALLOT ISSUES

House Speaker Ryan Smith (R-Bidwell) and Senate President Larry Obhof (R-Medina) jointly appointed the following individuals to prepare arguments against Issue 1, the proposed Neighborhood Safety, Drug Treatment, and Rehabilitation amendment to the Ohio Constitution that is on the November ballot:

Ohio Prosecuting Attorneys Association Executive Director Louis Tobin and Ohio Judicial Conference Executive Director and former Ohio Supreme Court Justice Paul Pfeifer.

The Ballot Board Wednesday approved ballot language for Issue 1, a proposed constitutional amendment mandating that criminal offenses of obtaining, possessing or using any drug cannot be classified as felonies, but only misdemeanors. If passed, it would also prohibit jail time as a sentence for obtaining, possessing or using drugs, and it would require sentence reductions of incarcerated individuals by up to 25 percent if the individual participated in rehabilitative, work or educational

programming, except individuals incarcerated for murder, rape or child molestation. In response to testimony from petitioners and opponents, the board modified the amendment's draft language prepared by board staff to reflect a greater clarity and accuracy of the measure.

CIVIL RIGHTS

The Ohio Civil Rights Commission announced the 2018 Hall of Fame inductees Tuesday including former Ohio House Speaker Jo Ann Davidson, African American educator Dr. Joseph Carter Corbin and the LGBTQ activist in the U.S. Supreme Court's *Obergefell v. Hodges* marriage equality ruling, James Obergefell. Other honorees include Dr. Errol Alexander, William Powell and Renee Powell.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Business relationships, cultural understanding and exchanges of students will help mainland China and the U.S. forge stronger ties and get back to smoother relations, Chinese officials visiting Ohio said Wednesday at a lunch hosted by JobsOhio. JobsOhio and the Greater Columbus Chinese Chamber of Commerce welcomed the vice governor for Ohio's sister state of Hubei Province, Daochi Tong, as well as Yumin Zhao, acting general consul for China in New York. Andrew Deye, JobsOhio's managing director of strategy, business development and research, joined them in addressing the lunch event.

EDUCATION

The Capitol Square Review and Advisory Board (CSRAB) and the Capitol Square Foundation announced Thursday that 75 school transportation grants to the Statehouse will be awarded for the 2018/2019 academic year, and the online application process will open at 9 a.m. on Wednesday, Sept. 5.

Attorney General Mike DeWine Tuesday filed a lawsuit against Electronic Classroom of Tomorrow (ECOT) founder William Lager, the shuttered online charter school's operator and management company, and others, claiming that the ECOT officers are "strictly and personally liable for disbursements made by the charter school without authority in Ohio law." In addition to Lager, the lawsuit, filed in Franklin County Common Pleas Court, names as defendants Altair Learning Management I Inc., which operated and managed ECOT; IQ Innovations LLC of Columbus; ECOT Superintendent Rick Teeters; ECOT Treasurer Michelle Smith; Christopher Meister, vice president of accounting for ECOT; Ann Barnes, Education Management Information System director for ECOT; and Regina Lukich, director of federal programs for ECOT.

As schools statewide face a shortage of student support staff members, such as school psychologists, school nurses and school occupational therapists, an Ohio Department of Education (ODE) workgroup prepared a list of recommendations to address those shortages. At Tuesday's meeting of the Related Service Personnel Workgroup at ODE, members voiced concerns about an inadequate "pipeline" from higher education into school support staff professions, as well as inadequate funding to hire those staff members and unrealistic work environment expectations that could lead to decreased retention of student support staff.

The Ohio School Boards Association (OSBA) recently selected Central Ohio school board member Lee Schreiner as its 2019 president-elect nominee. If elected during OSBA's statewide conference in November, he will become OSBA president in 2020 following his term as president-elect.

ELECTIONS

Nearly two-thirds of states are spending new Help America Vote Act (HAVA) grants on new voting equipment and enhanced cybersecurity protections, according to the U.S. Election Assistance Commission (EAC). The commission released the narratives and budgets for 48 of the 55 states and U.S. territories following the appropriation of \$380 million in new Help America Vote Act (HAVA) grants that were appropriated last March. Ohio is receiving nearly \$12.2 million in grants and is matching it with another \$609,301. Secretary of State Jon Husted outlined Ohio's plans for the grants earlier in the summer, including improving cybersecurity preparedness among all 88 county boards of election.

ELECTIONS 2018

Democratic lieutenant governor nominee Betty Sutton Monday met with leaders from the Ohio School Boards Association (OSBA), Buckeye Association of School Administrators (BASA) and Ohio Association of School Business Officials (OASBO) at OSBA's office in Columbus, the groups said. During the meeting, the groups said Sutton outlined the Democratic ticket's priorities for public education.

The Ohio Supreme Court Thursday dismissed a lawsuit filed by Republican Melanie Leneghan challenging the results of the 12th Congressional District Republican primary that she alleged included improprieties during the recount of votes in Muskingum County. Leneghan filed the lawsuit in June, demanding certain ballots that were cast in the May primary be thrown out. She argued that Muskingum elections officials had fraudulently tampered with ballots by unsealing them before the scheduled official recount, and that the board unlawfully counted them a day early without notice or authority. Leneghan claimed that if the ballots in the 16 precincts were thrown out, she would win the primary by 1,400 votes.

The following endorsements were made over the week:

- The re-election campaign of Rep. Dave Greenspan announced the endorsement of the International Union of Operating Engineers Local 18.
- Democratic attorney general nominee Steve Dettelbach announced the endorsement of former Vice President Joe Biden.
- The Ohio Society of CPAs endorsed Keith Faber for state auditor and Sherrod Brown for U.S. Senate.

The Ohio Senate campaign of Louise Valentine announced the endorsement of the Ohio Education Association.

- The Ohio AFL-CIO endorsed Melody Stewart and Michael Donnelly for Ohio Supreme Court.

EMPLOYMENT/UNEMPLOYMENT

Ohio's unemployment rate rose in July to 4.6 percent, up from 4.5 percent in June, even as the state added 7,600 jobs over the month, according to the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS). ODJFS said Ohio's nonagricultural wage and salary employment increased from a revised 5,608,500 in June to 5,616,100 in July 2018. The number of workers unemployed in Ohio in July was 265,000, up 6,000 from 259,000 in June. The number of unemployed has decreased by 28,000 in the past 12 months from 293,000. The July unemployment rate for Ohio decreased from 5.1 percent in July 2017.

ENVIRONMENT

Twenty-one environmental science and engineering students have been awarded scholarships to study at Ohio institutions of higher education through the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency's (Ohio EPA) Environmental Education Fund.

FEDERAL

As senators meet with Supreme Court nominee Brett Kavanaugh at the White House this week, U.S. Sen. Rob Portman (R-OH) signaled continued support for the nominee, who is expected to go before the Senate Judiciary Committee after Labor Day. Portman also said he recently met with advocates and conservationists at Lake Erie to discuss issues including harmful algal blooms, invasive species and dredging, among others. He welcomed the recent appropriation to protect Lake Erie and said a water infrastructure bill has recently be reported out of committee that will continue to protect the lake.

U.S. Sen. Sherrod Brown touted his newly introduced bill, the Full-Service Community Schools in Distressed Communities Act, which he said would provide \$45 million to schools nationwide to provide wraparound services such as school-based health clinics and mental health care. He spoke with reporters on a Thursday conference call.

GAMING/GAMBLING

Senate President Larry Obhof (R-Medina) Monday said the Senate will hold hearings on legislation to legalize sports gambling in Ohio in the wake of a U.S. Supreme Court decision but said he believes it will take an amendment to the Ohio Constitution before it is legal in the state. Obhof said that he personally wouldn't support such an amendment, but said he believes the Ohio Constitution generally prohibits gambling of any kind with the exceptions of what has already been approved by voters.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY/STATEHOUSE

Rep. Emilia Sykes (D-Akron) Wednesday sent a letter to Gov. John Kasich asking his administration to agree to mediation to resolve her Ohio Civil Rights Commission complaint filed over Statehouse and Vern Riffe Center security practices. Sykes filed the complaint alleging discrimination on the basis of her race and gender, after claiming that she and other black female lawmakers had been subjected to additional scrutiny at security stations at the Statehouse and other government buildings. The Ohio State Highway Patrol and the Ohio Department of Public Safety (ODPS) agreed to investigate, later saying the agencies did not find unprofessional conduct or bias but also cited two lieutenants for not properly handling a complaint. The complaints were filed against ODPS, Ohio Department of Administrative Services (DAS), Capitol Square Review and Advisory Board (CSRAB) and the Ohio House of Representatives.

GOVERNOR

Gov. John Kasich said Tuesday he won't attend his party's annual dinner on Friday, Aug. 24, at which President Donald Trump will be the featured speaker. The governor said he'll be spending time with one of his twin daughters as she moves to college.

Members of the Ohio Collaborative Community-Police Advisory Board looked to the state's next governor Wednesday for signs that Gov. John Kasich's public safety achievement will continue into the next administration, with one longtime member suggesting its voluntary policing standards may need to become mandatory for all law enforcement agencies to comply. Republican Attorney General Mike DeWine's campaign staff later informed *Hannah News* that he is "supportive of the governor's work in bringing this group together" and would continue the advisory board in 2019 if elected. Democratic opponent Richard Cordray did not respond to a similar request for comment.

Appointments made during the week include the following:

- Penny J. Queen of Lancaster (Fairfield County) to the Public Benefits Advisory Board for a term beginning Aug. 20, 2018, and ending June 30, 2021.
- James C. Miles of Miamisburg (Montgomery County) to the Credit Union Council for a term beginning Aug. 20, 2018, and ending Sept. 22, 2020.
- Leen Heresh of Lucasville (Scioto County) to serve as a student member on the Shawnee State University Board of Trustees for a term beginning Aug. 20, 2018, and ending June 30, 2020.
- Lara Baker-Morrish of Dublin (Franklin County), Paula M. Brown of Columbus (Franklin County), and Commissioner David L. Painter of New Richmond (Clermont County) reappointed to the Ohio Criminal Sentencing Commission for terms beginning Aug. 22, 2018 and ending Aug. 21, 2022.
- Chief Brandon K. Standley of Bellefontaine (Logan County) to the Ohio Criminal Sentencing Commission for a term beginning Aug. 22, 2018 and ending Aug. 21, 2022.
- Roshay S. Timmons of Wilberforce (Greene County) as a student member on the Central State University Board of Trustees for a term beginning Aug. 21, 2018, and ending June 30, 2020.
- Carol Wilson of Commercial Point (Pickaway County) reappointed to the Self-Insuring Employers Evaluation Board for a term beginning Aug. 23, 2018, and ending Aug. 22, 2022.
- Doreen N. Uhas-Sauer of Columbus (Franklin County) to the Ohio Historic Site Preservation Advisory Board for a term beginning Aug. 22, 2018, and ending Jan. 14, 2020.

GREAT LAKES

Senate President Larry Obhof (R-Medina) and House Speaker Ryan Smith (R-Bidwell) announced Monday the roster for the Toward a Cleaner Lake Erie Working Group; co-chairs are Sen. Bob Hackett (R-London) and Rep. Brian Hill (R-Zanesville), who head the agriculture committees of their respective chambers. Other members include Sens. Edna Brown (D-Toledo), Matt Dolan (R-Chagrin Falls), Randy Gardner (R-Bowling Green), Robert McColley (R-Napoleon), Bob Peterson (R-Sabina) and Mike Skindell (D-Lakewood); and Reps. Steve Arndt (R-Port Clinton), Jim Hoops (R-Napoleon), Riordan McClain (R-Upper Sandusky), John Patterson (D-Jefferson) and Michael Sheehy (D-Oregon). The first meeting will be on Tuesday, Aug. 28 in the Senate Finance Hearing Room. A second meeting in Northwest Ohio is being planned for the fall.

HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Dave Blom, the outgoing president and chief executive officer of OhioHealth, and Steven Allen, the outgoing chief executive officer of Nationwide Children's Hospital, spoke at Wednesday's Columbus Metropolitan Club (CMC) forum, weighing in on the growth of their hospitals as well as the challenges of the industry going forward, with one saying change should not come from the government. Both addressed the growth of their systems, with Allen saying Children's growth is just an extension of the hospital's core mission of providing care for children. Blom said his health system is community-based and lives and dies by how well it serves the communities it is in.

OhioHealth believes health care ought to be delivered as close to where people are, Blom said, and that philosophy has played into its expansion into a 47-county region in Ohio.

HOUSING/HOMELESSNESS

Ohio home sales increased 2.6 percent in July versus the same month last year, and average prices grew by even more, according to the Ohio Association of Realtors. July's sales of 152,091 exceeded the previous record for the month of 148,650 and were up from July 2017's figure of 148,247.

MARIJUANA

The state's first two private medical marijuana testing laboratories have received provisional licenses, the Ohio Department of Commerce (DOC) announced Friday. Battelle Memorial Institute in Columbus (Franklin County) and North Coast Testing Laboratories LLC in Streetsboro (Portage County) were awarded licenses. The department is still reviewing applications from five other private testing labs, DOC spokesperson Kerry Francis told *Hannah News*. There is no limit on the number of testing labs that can operate in the state.

MEDICAID/MEDICAID REFORM

More people on Medicaid are seeing family doctors and fewer are visiting emergency rooms, and most enrollees says the program makes it easier for them to find and keep jobs, according to a new report from the Kasich administration. The Ohio Department of Medicaid (ODM) Tuesday released an updated version of its 2016 assessment of the Group VIII expansion population, alongside a financial outlook from Budget Director Tim Keen saying program finances are sound and should remain so. Keen said the state gets a good deal with the enhanced rate of federal matching funds for expansion -- 90 percent for FY21 forward, versus about 63 percent for the traditional Medicaid program. But Keen said the state's 10 percent share actually drops to around 3 percent when considering other ways expansion helps the state save money, such as the ability to bill Medicaid for some prison health care and the additional revenue generated from the state's health insuring corporation (HIC) assessment on managed care plans.

Gov. John Kasich stopped in on Tuesday's press conference on the report, offering one caveat to Keen's assessment, while otherwise echoing the message that Ohio is better off for having expanded the program. "It is affordable now. I want to be clear, if the federal government plays games and tries to put us in a perilous fiscal position, we will have to change," he said.

MILITARY AFFAIRS

An essential component of the state's anti-drug operation often flies under the radar, according to Ohio National Guard (ONG) officials. "The Counterdrug Task Force is one of our best-kept secrets," ONG spokesperson Jordyn Sadowski told reporters at Rickenbacker Air National Guard Base in Columbus on Wednesday. "We're trying to no longer make it a secret because what they're doing in the community through their partners and the support they provide to fight the war on drugs is extremely vital."

NATURAL RESOURCES

Hunting has faced declining interest, particularly among young people, but a new coalition hopes to change that in Ohio by highlighting the economic benefits it creates. Leaders of "Hunting Works For Ohio," a partnership of business and sporting interests, joined Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) Division of Wildlife Chief Mike Miller in outlining their efforts to reporters Monday. Miller said the partnership would deepen ties between ODNR and the range of member groups that it already has existing relationships with. The Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) announced it will run a lottery for hunters to win special archery deer hunting opportunities at nine locations bordering four of the state's scenic rivers.

Foreseeing potential financial and logistical problems, the newly-formed Oil and Gas Leasing Commission voted Wednesday to begin the process of inventorying and classifying state lands for potential drilling operations, but also to inform the Legislature of their concerns about that process. At the commission's second meeting, members heard a presentation on its authority and duties, which generated concerns among members. The commission, created by legislation in 2011, lacked any appointees from Gov. John Kasich's office until the House and Senate threatened to turn appointment authority over to the Legislature.

STATE GOVERNMENT

A request from Ohio State University for \$500,000 to pay New York law firm Debevoise & Plimpton, LLC to lead an investigation into Ohio State University football coach Urban Meyer was deferred at the request of the university at Monday's meeting of the Controlling Board. The board proceeded to approve all other requests on the agenda.

TAXATION

Pew Charitable Trusts in cooperation with the Rockefeller Institute of Government recently released a study looking at sin taxes -- those traditional taxes on tobacco, alcohol and gambling as well as the newer sin taxes on recreational marijuana and e-tobacco and the potential for sports betting. Report author Mary Murphy said this study was driven by budget difficulties in many states, the growth of e-cigarettes and the recent legalization of recreational marijuana and sports betting. As a fix for debt, however, sin taxes are not a "silver bullet" for budget challenges, she stressed.

TECHNOLOGY

Blockchain is often associated with the cryptocurrency bitcoin, but the information security technology would be useful to a wide range of industries once it's fully developed. In fact, Speaker Ryan Smith (R-Bidwell) said Thursday it could one day be on par with the advancements created by the Internet and smartphones. Smith said a press conference Thursday, which featured industry leaders and Reps. Bill Reineke (R-Tiffin), Laura Lanese (R-Grove City), Scott Ryan (R-Newark) and Gary Scherer (R-Circleville), was not to announce pending legislation but to say he would be working to make House members more aware of how blockchain works in order to enact better laws addressing it. Smith also said Senate President Larry Obhof (R-Medina) has expressed interest in the topic as well.

TRANSPORTATION/INFRASTRUCTURE

The Stark Area Regional Transit Authority (SARTA) announced that it is heading up a public-private partnership that will lead to the construction of at least 13 hydrogen, electric and compressed natural gas (CNG) refueling facilities along highways in Ohio and Southern Michigan. As a first step, the SARTA-led consortium recently applied for a multi-million-dollar grant from the U.S. Department of Transportation.

UTILITIES

AEP Ohio has established an incentive program to encourage the installation of electric vehicle (EV) charging stations at public sites, workplaces and apartment complexes. The \$10 million program provides funding for up to 375 EV charging stations throughout the AEP Ohio service territory, the company said.

The Public Utilities Commission of Ohio (PUCO) says it will back federal efforts to combat artificial price suppression by subsidized generating plants in Ohio and other states operating under PJM Interconnection's wholesale market, approving draft comments Wednesday to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC).

WORKERS' COMPENSATION

The Ohio Bureau of Workers' Compensation (BWC) has awarded \$1.2 million in grants to 43 Ohio employers to purchase equipment designed to substantially reduce or eliminate workplace injuries and illnesses. BWC said employers receiving grants operate in 28 counties around the state; one employer received two grants.

LEGISLATIVE ACTIVITY:

SENATE:

No legislative activity to report.

HOUSE:

No legislative activity to report.