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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

Gov. Mike DeWine Friday announced a new panel to advise his RecoveryOhio initiative that will include former Gov. Ted Strickland and former Ohio Supreme Court Justice Evelyn Lundberg Stratton. DeWine, speaking in Columbus at the first meeting of the council that he created by executive order on Monday, said the RecoveryOhio Advisory Council will advise RecoveryOhio Director Alisha Nelson on strategies and ways for agencies to better collaborate and work together on the drug addiction problem in the state. He said the group will make actionable recommendations, including fiscal appropriations for the upcoming state budget, and he is asking for the recommendations to be delivered to him no later than Friday, March 8.

ATTORNEY GENERAL

Johnson & Johnson and companies it owns will pay 45 states including Ohio and the District of Columbia \$120 million as part of a settlement to resolve allegations that a Johnson & Johnson-

owned company unlawfully promoted its own metal-on-metal hip implant device, Ohio Attorney General Dave Yost said Tuesday.

CHILDREN/FAMILIES

The Ohio Children's Trust Fund (OCTF), in collaboration with the Governor's Ohio Human Trafficking Task Force, awarded over \$90,000 in grant funding to seven organizations to develop and implement human trafficking prevention programs across Ohio. These projects will identify and assist at-risk youth and provide them with information and resources to prevent human trafficking, OCTF said.

The recently formed Governor's Advisory Committee on Home Visitation held its first meeting Thursday to introduce the body's goals and responsibilities to the members as well as share a baseline understanding of some of Ohio's state-funded home visitation and early intervention programs. LeeAnne Cornyn, Gov. Mike DeWine's director of Children's Initiatives, kicked the meeting off by walking members through the executive order signed by DeWine earlier in the month.

CIVIL RIGHTS

Gov. Mike DeWine, former U.S. Secretary of Education John King and other officials spoke of the need to increase opportunity for all children at Monday's annual Martin Luther King Jr. breakfast in Columbus, this year focused on the message of King's essay, "The Purpose of Education." The essay, which King wrote while a student at Morehouse College, states in part: "We must remember that intelligence is not enough. Intelligence plus character -- that is the true goal of education." In it, King cites the late Georgia Gov. Eugene Talmadge, "possessed of one of the better minds of Georgia ... By all measuring rods, Mr. Talmadge could think critically and intensively; yet he contends that I am an inferior being. Are those the types of men we called educated?"

DISABILITIES

As he retired after serving 12 years as director of the Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities (DODD) under two governors, John Martin published the following letter to the disabilities field: "It has been my privilege to serve with all of you over the past 12 years. I started at a time when there was much discord in the field, and I appreciated that I was given the opportunity and support to work at eliminating that discord. Because of that, together we got through the recession without cutting rates or services -- a standard we have been able to maintain through the ups and downs of these past 12 years."

EDUCATION

Ohio ranked 24th in the nation on preparing its students for success, according to the annual "Quality Counts" report on state educational quality from *Education Week*. The publication this year is breaking Quality Counts into three installments, with a report on school finances due in June and another on academic achievement measures in September. Ohio earned a B-minus on the report's chance-for-success index, which looks at 13 indicators in three categories: early foundations, school years and adult outcomes. The average grade for states is C-minus.

The numbers of Ohio charter schools and students attending them declined again last school year, continuing a downward trend that's held since those numbers peaked in the 2013-2014 academic year, according to the Ohio Department of Education's annual report on charter schools. The report, released at the end of 2018, tallies charter school enrollment at 104,000 for the 2017-2018 school year, or about 7 percent of overall student enrollment in the state. That compares to 110,961 the previous year, 120,893 at the charter sector's peak in 2013-2014 and 82,643 a decade ago. The number of schools, 340, is down from 362 in 2016-2017 and 395 in the peak year, but up from the 326 schools operating 10 years ago.

The National Alliance for Public Charter Schools (NAPCS) marked the observance of School Choice Week with the release of its 10th annual rating of states' laws governing charter schools, which puts Ohio mid-pack at 23rd among 44 jurisdictions that authorize charter schools -- essentially unchanged from the previous year. Ohio was 23rd of 45 last year; NAPCS dropped Kentucky from its ratings this year because a funding impasse rendered that state's relatively new charter school law moot for the moment. Another of Ohio's neighbors, Indiana, retained its No. 1 spot in the report, while Michigan is 27th and Pennsylvania is 34th. West Virginia does not have a charter school law. Maryland is rated last.

Career technical and adult education facilities deserve more state funding for renovation and equipment upgrades, Gov. Mike DeWine said Wednesday. "As we look to the future, and as we work with the Legislature, this is a governor who is going to be very mindful of how important the career centers are," DeWine told attendees of a legislative seminar held by the Ohio Association for Career and Technical Education (Ohio ACTE) at the Capitol Square Sheraton.

Major strides are by being made by businesses in developing the job opportunities of tomorrow, as well as by educators in giving students the skills they need to succeed. The problem is, those two sides aren't always communicating well. That will be one of his priorities in his new role, Lt. Gov. Jon Husted told the audience at a closing address of the Ohio Association for Career and Technical Education's 2019 Legislative Seminar at the Capitol Square Sheraton Thursday.

EMPLOYMENT/UNEMPLOYMENT

Ohio's unemployment rate remained at 4.6 percent in December, the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) said Friday, unchanged from the November rate as the state added 2,900 jobs over the month. According to ODJFS, the number of workers unemployed in Ohio in December was 265,000, up 2,000 from 263,000 in November. The number of unemployed has decreased by 16,000 in the past 12 months from 281,000. The December unemployment rate for Ohio decreased from 4.9 percent in December 2017. The U.S. unemployment rate for December was 3.9 percent, up from 3.7 percent in November, and down from 4.1 percent in December 2017.

FEDERAL

A U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) policy banning transgender individuals who have been diagnosed with "gender dysphoria" and are seeking or have already received medical gender transition treatments can go into effect immediately, the U.S. Supreme Court (SCOTUS) ordered Tuesday. The three separate but related cases challenging the Trump administration's policy in the U.S. District Court for the Central

District of California, U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia and the U.S. Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals will continue, however, as SCOTUS denied the government's request to bypass the lower courts completely and grant a writ of certiorari.

The Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts (AO) now estimates that federal courts can sustain funded operations through Thursday, Jan. 31. The Judiciary continues to explore ways to conserve funds so it can sustain paid operations through Feb. 1. No further extensions beyond Feb. 1 will be possible. The Judiciary previously had revised its estimate for exhausting available funds from Jan. 18 to Jan. 25.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY/STATEHOUSE

Rep. John Becker (R-Cincinnati) said this weekend he will donate the legislative pay increase he received as a part of 132-SB296 (Hottinger) to community groups, starting with sending his January increase to the Cincinnati Nature Center.

Recently elected Rep. Don Manning (R-New Middletown) told *Hannah News* he is well aware of the fact that he's a change of pace for Ohio's 59th district. He's the first Republican in decades to hold the seat near Youngstown, but his interests don't have much to do with partisan politics. Manning's background is in criminal justice. In the past, he's had experience as a truancy officer, a detention officer and a juvenile probate officer. Following that work, he was a case manager at nonprofit organizations.

The Ohio House of Representatives and Ohio Senate announced their members to a number of joint committees including the Controlling Board, Joint Committee on Agency Rule Review (JCARR), Joint Education Oversight Committee (JEOC), Joint Legislative Ethics Committee (JLEC), Joint Medicaid Oversight Committee (JMOC), Legislative Task Force on Redistricting, Reapportionment and Demographic Research and the Sunset Review Committee.

House Speaker Larry Householder (R-Glenford) Tuesday announced the hiring of Matthew McAuliffe as the deputy chief of staff for policy for the House majority, where McAuliffe will lead the development and implementation of the Republican Caucus policy agenda.

Rep. Emilia Sykes (D-Akron) was chosen by her colleagues to serve as House minority leader in the 133rd General Assembly after a caucus meeting Wednesday. She succeeds Rep. Fred Strahorn (D-Dayton), who stepped down after he was on the opposite side of most his caucus when it voted for House Speaker Larry Householder (R-Glenford) at the beginning of session. Rep. Kristin Boggs (D-Columbus) was chosen as assistant minority leader while Rep. Kent Smith (D-Euclid) was elected minority whip and Rep. Paula Hicks-Hudson (D-Toledo), a former Toledo mayor and serving her first term in the House, was elected assistant minority whip.

Reps. Niraj Antani (R-Miamisburg) and Glenn Holmes (D-McDonald) are reintroducing legislation in the 133rd General Assembly that would add penalties for the owners of dangerous dogs that injure or kill people and expand the powers of county dog wardens. Antani said he'd like to start work early on the issue that has appeared multiple times in the past. The text of the legislation is nearly identical to 132-SB195 (Beagle-Lehner), which stalled in the Senate Judiciary Committee in February 2018.

Senate President Larry Obhof (R-Medina) Thursday previewed what might be among the first bills introduced in his chamber, saying many will address regulatory reform, as well as another Lake Erie and waterway protection bill.

A new federal lawsuit filed this week claims Sen. Joe Uecker (R-Loveland) illegally blocked a Batavia man from his official Facebook page after a discussion over Uecker's support for the heartbeat bill, which would ban abortions once a fetal heartbeat can be detected, according to the *Cincinnati Enquirer*. The newspaper reported Anthony Fambry filed the lawsuit in U.S. District Court in Cincinnati, claiming Uecker violated Fambry's First Amendment right to freedom of speech after banning Fambry from commenting on Uecker's official Facebook page and deleting comments from a post.

GOVERNOR

Gov. Mike DeWine convened his first cabinet meeting Tuesday, about a week after taking the oath of office. After a group picture and ceremonial photo shoots with cabinet members and their families, DeWine spoke briefly about the message he'd have for them in the meeting, stressing that he and they are "the servant of the people."

DeWine administration officials faced a Friday deadline for determining the effects of the federal government shutdown, Gov. Mike DeWine said Wednesday. He also said he expects to nominate a director to the Ohio Department of Health (ODH) in the next 10 days. On another question concerning whether he will pursue merging several education-related agencies, DeWine commented that it's not generally his philosophy to pursue major structural changes in government.

HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) this month launched a new foster care and adoption website to give Ohioans more information about the process. The website - www.FosterAndAdopt.jfs.ohio.gov -- contains information for both current and prospective foster and adoptive families.

HOUSING/HOMELESSNESS

Ohioans sold slightly fewer homes in 2018 compared to 2017, but garnered higher prices on average, according to Ohio Realtors. Sales in 2018 reached 150,258, a 1.0 percent drop from the record-setting 151,748 seen in 2017. The average sales price increased 5.6 percent, from \$172,884 to \$182,561. Total sales volume of \$27.8 billion in 2018 was 4.9 percent higher than 2017's \$26.5 billion.

LOBBYISTS

The Ohio Municipal League (OML) Wednesday announced the hiring of Thomas Wetmore as legislative advocate. Most recently, Wetmore worked for a political action committee as a grassroots voter outreach manager for Ohio's 2018 gubernatorial election.

MARIJUANA

On the first day of operation last week, Ohio medical marijuana dispensaries sold \$75,000 worth of product to patients. Dispensaries sold 8.7 pounds of cannabis, according to a release from the Ohio Board of Pharmacy (OBP).

MEDICAID/MEDICAID REFORM

Policy experts met Thursday for a debate on Medicaid work requirements that quickly morphed into a broader discuss about the federal-state health care program's efficacy and sustainability. The Columbus Lawyers Chapter of the Federalist Society hosted Thursday's discussion with Michael Cannon, health policy studies director for the Cato Institute, and Loren Anthes, a Medicaid policy fellow with the Cleveland-based Center for Community Solutions.

NATURAL RESOURCES

The Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) released the final version of its Lake Erie Coastal Erosion Area maps. These maps will now be used to determine if a property along Ohio's Lake Erie coast is located within a designated Coastal Erosion Area (CEA), ODNR said. The 2018 maps are replacing the 2010 maps.

ODNR has designated the 152nd wildlife area in the state for the purpose of wildlife conservation, propagation and habitat management. In December 2018, the ODNR Division of Wildlife closed on property in Southwest Brown County, with this newly-purchased parcel to be known as the Eagle Creek Wildlife Area.

Kendra Wecker is now the chief of the ODNR Division of Wildlife, ODNR Director Mary Mertz announced over the weekend. Wecker has advised numerous ODNR Division of Wildlife chiefs and other senior staff on legislative issues for all aspects of hunting, fishing, trapping and shooting sports. She has also worked on many large projects including commercial fishing regulations, Sunday hunting and shooting ranges.

NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS

JobsOhio announced this week that it has earned of the Ohio Association of Nonprofit Organizations' (OANO) Seal of Excellence for successfully completing its Standards for Excellence accreditation program. Organizations bearing the seal not only obey the law, but also go beyond the minimum requirements for nonprofits set forth by government regulation, JobsOhio explained.

PEOPLE

Ruth McNeil has joined Citizens for Community Values (CCV) to lead the organization's statewide church ambassador network program, the Daniel Initiative, CCV announced Friday.

Former U.S. Rep. Jim Renacci will seek to continue his work in the public policy arena through a new political nonprofit he founded named Ohio's Future Foundation. He said Ohio's Future Foundation, where he will serve as chairman, is a policy and action-oriented organization that has the goal to move Ohio forward and "to support and empower businesses, grassroots and faith-based organizations, and individuals to listen, learn and lead Ohio into a brighter future." More information on the group can be found at www.ohiosfuturefoundation.org.

Scott Coleman, Logan County engineer, was installed as president of the Ohio Council of County Officials (OCCO) for 2019-20 at the council's January meeting by Clermont County Common Pleas Court Judge Jerry McBride, who had served as OCCO president for the previous two years. Also installed were Vice President Jill Thompson, Athens County Auditor and Secretary/Treasurer Michelle Mumford, Shelby County Clerk of Courts.

POVERTY

Despite the fact that in 2017, 14.9 percent of Ohio's residents lived in poverty -- up from 13.3 percent in 2006 before the Great Recession -- a new report from Policy Matters Ohio (PMO) shows that state support for some antipoverty programs has eroded. The full report can be found online at <https://tinyurl.com/yazumvg2>.

The latest edition of "Ohio Kids Count 2018," recently released by the Children's Defense Fund-Ohio (CDF), called for a "two-generational approach" to improve outcomes in child development and wellbeing where parents and children receive supports from state and local governments in order for parents to provide supportive environments where their children can live and grow. The report broadly recommended governments provide greater supports in the areas of education, water quality and lead mitigation, housing, workforce training and foster care as well as providing additional supports for single mothers and black and Hispanic populations.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Members of the 141st Basic Peace Officer Class received training certificates during a graduation ceremony held Wednesday afternoon at the Ohio State Highway Patrol (OSHP) Training Academy. The 34 graduates will assume duties as peace officers for 17 Ohio agencies.

TAXATION

A bill that would eliminate the sales tax on feminine hygiene products will soon be reintroduced in the House with Republican Rep. Niraj Antani (Miamisburg) as joint sponsor, Rep. Brigid Kelly (D-Cincinnati) said Thursday at a news conference on Ohio State University's (OSU) main campus with other advocates for increasing access to tampons and pads.

TECHNOLOGY

While it moved from the Ohio Attorney General's Office to the Ohio Department of Administrative Services (DAS) after Gov. Mike DeWine was sworn in, the CyberOhio Advisory Board will continue working to aid businesses in fighting back against cyber-attacks and developing recommendations to further economic and workforce development in IT and cybersecurity. CyberOhio Director Gregory Tapocsi said at the board's first 2019 meeting Wednesday that the move has been "a whirlwind" process, but it will offer CyberOhio more resources, adding that DAS is tasked under state law with working externally to improve cybersecurity. Since CyberOhio was not created by statute or executive order, Tapocsi said, it had freedom to be moved unilaterally.

TRANSPORTATION/INFRASTRUCTURE

The Ohio Turnpike saw a decrease in the number of vehicles traveling along the toll road in 2018, the Ohio Turnpike Commission said. The decrease comes after three straight years of record-

breaking increases in the number of vehicles on the road. According to the commission, 54.3 million passenger and commercial vehicles used the Ohio Turnpike in 2018, compared to 55.2 million vehicles in 2017, which set a record.

UTILITIES

Commissioner Tom Johnson will not seek reappointment to his seat on the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio (PUCO), leaving 23 other applicants to vie for Gov. Mike DeWine's nod. The PUCO on Friday released the list of applicants, along with Johnson's statement announcing his decision to bow out. Among applicants to replace him are a handful of former legislators: Toledo's Michael Ashford, who was lead Democrat on the House Public Utilities Committee; Gene Krebs, formerly a House member, Preble County commissioner and chairman of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel Governing Board; and David Daniels, a former representative and senator who served as Kasich's agriculture director until being fired late in the administration because of a disagreement on water issues. The PUCO Nominating Council will meet Thursday, Jan. 31 to interview selected candidates and recommend four finalists for DeWine's consideration. He must appoint one of them within 30 days or request a new list of candidates. The appointment is subject to Senate confirmation.

FirstEnergy Solutions (FES) announced Wednesday that it had reached an agreement for a restructuring support agreement to emerge from bankruptcy in September or October 2019. The agreement will allow FirstEnergy to emerge as a "fully integrated Independent Power Producer focused on maximizing the operating and financial synergies of its retail, nuclear and fossil generating assets," according to a release. However, the Ohio Consumers' Counsel (OCC) said that the company is still seeking a "legislative bail-out of its uncompetitive old power plants."

WORKERS' COMPENSATION

The Ohio Bureau of Workers' Compensation (BWC) Thursday recommended a 20 percent reduction in the average premium rate charged to private employers, which will be the largest cut in nearly 60 years if approved by the BWC Board of Directors on Friday, Feb. 22. If approved, the reduction would be effective July 1 and will save private employers \$244 million over premiums for FY19. The 20 percent figure would be an average, and the actual premium paid by individual private employers would depend on a number of factors, "including the expected future claims costs in their industry, their company's recent claims history and their participation in various BWC rebate programs," BWC said.

LEGISLATIVE ACTIVITY:

SENATE:

No legislative activity to report.

HOUSE:

No legislative activity to report.