



**GOVERNMENTAL POLICY GROUP, INC.**

**RH RESOURCES**

17 SOUTH HIGH STREET – SUITE 245

COLUMBUS, OHIO 43215-3413

PHONE: 614-461-9335

FAX: 614-461-9336



**Week in Review**

November 8, 2019

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**

Summit County leads Ohio in Drug Abuse Response Team (DART) grants authorized by budget bill 132-HB49 (R. Smith) and in new awards announced recently by the Ohio Attorney General's office. Cuyahoga, Franklin, Hamilton, Mahoning, Montgomery and Stark counties follow with the largest DART totals to date, including a major focus on sheriff's offices. Attorney General Dave Yost awarded another \$1.3 million to 30 government subdivisions after previous DART grants of \$3 million in 2017. Yost says he's expanded state intervention into drug addiction, overdose and death with Quick Response Teams (QRT) in 31 counties.

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services recently awarded Deric Kenne, associate professor of health policy and management in Kent State University's (KSU) College of Public Health, and his team a five-year, \$1.5 million grant to develop and implement drug prevention infrastructure in Portage, Geauga and Lake counties. The project, called the Northeast Ohio Tri-County Prevention

Infrastructure, will work to prevent the onset and reduce the progression of alcohol and other drug use in youth ages nine to 20 in the three counties.

## **AGING**

The Ohio Department of Aging (ODA) is currently seeking nominations of older adults for induction into the Senior Citizens Hall of Fame in 2020. Nominees must be native-born or long-time Ohio residents who have played significant roles in their communities. The deadline for nominations Friday, Nov. 29. For more information, to access the nomination form and to view past inductees, go online to [www.aging.ohio.gov/halloffame](http://www.aging.ohio.gov/halloffame). A paper nomination form can also be requested by calling 614-728-0253.

## **AGRICULTURE**

The Ohio Ecological Food and Farm Association has received a \$570,327 grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA), U.S. Sen. Sherrod Brown announced. The organization received the funding to provide hands-on training and support for new Ohio farmers, Brown's office said.

## **ATTORNEY GENERAL**

Ohio Attorney General Dave Yost announced that the Ohio Peace Officer Training Academy (OPOTA) received two grants totaling \$280,000 for law enforcement training on topics including identifying impaired drivers and investigating traffic collisions.

Attorney General Dave Yost and members of the House and Senate announced legislative proposals Wednesday meant to address human trafficking by focusing more on the demand side and making it easier to prosecute pimps. Sen. Tim Schaffer (R-Lancaster) said he would sponsor legislation to divide the offense of solicitation, so tougher penalties can be imposed on the buyers of sex rather than the sellers, with escalating sanctions for repeat offenses. Yost said they also hope to require "john school" programs now in use in some jurisdictions for all such offenses. Offenders would likely bear the cost of such programs, he said.

## **FY20-21 BUDGET**

State tax revenues were a little more than 1 percent ahead of projections for October and for the first third of FY20, according to preliminary figures released Wednesday by the Office of Budget and Management (OBM). Collections were \$25.6 million or 1.3 percent over estimates for October, reaching \$2 billion, with stronger sales tax revenues offsetting an income tax shortfall.

## **BUSINESS/CORPORATE**

Google recently broke ground on a new data center in New Albany. The company said the facility represents a \$600 million investment in Ohio's Internet infrastructure. The tech company also announced the launch of Google.org Impact Challenge Ohio, a \$1 million grant competition aimed at nonprofits with ideas about how to create economic opportunity for Ohio communities.

GM has sold its shuttered Lordstown plant to the Lordstown Motor Company, whose website - only made public Thursday afternoon - confirmed it would be located at the "previously idled" GM

Lordstown complex. Production is expected to ramp up "as early as the second half of 2020," and the company will work to prepare the plant and develop a sustainability plan with the Lordstown community before that occurs.

## **CHILDREN/FAMILIES**

An advisory group of foster care alumni, adoptive parents, caseworkers, juvenile judges and others will travel the state for public input on how to reform Ohio's foster care system under an executive order signed Monday by Gov. Mike DeWine. Ohio's foster care system is "bursting at the seams," owing largely to the havoc opioid addiction brings to families, DeWine said during a press conference at the Highlights for Children headquarters in Columbus. That includes a growing number of children taken from their parents as infants, many with Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome.

A simpler blood testing procedure and a new partnership with the Columbus Department of Education should lead to a substantial increase in the number of the city's children being screened for lead poisoning, Columbus Public Health (CPH) officials told Gov. Mike DeWine on Tuesday. Leading a roundtable discussion attended by DeWine, CPH Commissioner Mysheika Roberts, Ohio Department of Medicaid (ODM) Director Maureen Corcoran and Ohio Department of Health (ODH) Director Amy Acton, among other state and city officials, CPH Population Health Division Administrator Luke Jacobs said while his organization's 2017 "knock and drop" campaign knocked on 1,361 doors and dropped more than 4,200 door hangers, only 35 children were screened.

The Wednesday meeting of the bicameral Children's Caucus focused on ways to address and prevent lead poisoning in Ohio's children -- a day after the governor had joined his own Lead Advisory Committee for its Columbus meeting. The Children's Caucus heard from panelists Gabriella Celeste, policy director for the Schubert Center for Child Studies, discussing the work of the Ohio Lead Free Kids Coalition; Ron Rees, executive director of the Corporation for Ohio Appalachian Development (COAD), who discussed the various training programs his agency runs in "lead safe" renovation methods and lead abatement; and Gina Wilt, advocacy director at the Coalition on Homelessness and Housing in Ohio (COHHIO), who discussed the link between housing and homelessness and the need to not walk away from housing because of the housing shortage.

## **CIVIL RIGHTS**

After 35 years of public service and 18 years as executive director of the Ohio Civil Rights Commission (OCRC), G. Michael Payton has announced he will retire effective Dec. 31, 2019.

## **DISABILITIES**

After more than 12 years as executive director of Disability Rights Ohio (DRO), Michael Kirkman will retire early in 2020. Kirkman has actually spent more 32 years with the group having served as legal director for its predecessor organization, Ohio Legal Rights Service (OLRS), for 20 years before becoming director.

The search to find Kirkman's successor will begin immediately. The board has established a search committee that will identify potential candidates. Applications from both internal and external applicants are currently being accepted and may be submitted to [execsearch@disabilityrightsohio.org](mailto:execsearch@disabilityrightsohio.org). Interested parties can go to <https://www.disabilityrightsohio.org/execsearch> for more information.

## **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

Rural communities carry significant potential for development but need a concentrated state focus to support them, according to a report released by the Montrose Group. The report included a comparison of Ohio, Missouri and North Carolina.

## **EDUCATION**

The state of Ohio should be ready to participate if Congress passes the U.S. Department of Education's (USDOE) proposed \$5 billion "freedom scholarship" program, Senate Majority Floor Leader Matt Huffman (R-Lima) said Monday.

Municipal and school officials in Youngstown are reportedly working on an agreement in court to delay mayoral appointment of a new school board, allowing board members elected and re-elected this week to serve for the time being rather than be displaced under the state's academic distress law. The board had filed suit Monday against Mayor Jamael Tito Brown to block the appointments.

## **ELECTIONS**

Reps. Erica Crawley (D-Columbus) and Bride Rose Sweeney (D-Cleveland) announced that they are introducing legislation that will make Election Day a paid state holiday for Ohio workers. The Democrats made their announcement as Ohio voters went to the polls Tuesday to cast ballots in municipal and other local elections.

## **ELECTIONS 2019**

Ohioans voted Tuesday in a number of mayoral races as well as other municipal offices, school boards, and judicial seats. In addition, there were more than 1,500 local issues on the ballot. According to Secretary of State Frank LaRose's office, 320,299 ballots had been cast statewide at the close of early voting on Monday. That included more than 194,034 ballots cast by mail, 125,666 in-person ballots, and 599 military and overseas ballots. There are currently 7,689,091 Ohioans registered to vote.

Mayors in three of Ohio's largest cities won re-election on Tuesday, though for two of them, there was little to no opposition. Columbus Mayor Andrew Ginther received 94 percent of the vote, with the other 6 percent going to write-in candidates, giving Ginther his second term. Canton Mayor Thomas Bernabei also won an uncontested election. In Akron, Democratic Mayor Dan Horrigan also won a second term, defeating Republican Josh Sines. Other mayors winning another term Tuesday included Democratic Marion Mayor Scott Scherzer and Republican Newark Mayor Jeff Hall. Not all incumbents survived, as Republican Don Mason defeated current Zanesville Mayor Jeff Tilton, a Democrat, and Democrat Dave Light unseated Republican Norwalk Mayor Rob Duncan.

Local voters approved 28 of 30 library funding issues on ballots Tuesday, a 93 percent passage rate, according to the Ohio Library Council (OLC). Winning issues included two new levies, 22 renewals, two replacements, one renewal with an increase and one replacement with an increase. Losing issues were Ashtabula County District Library's additional 0.25 mill continuing levy and Louisville Public Library's five-year renewal of a 1-mill levy, both narrow losses of about 100 votes or less.

Ohio voters approved 73 percent of local school funding issues on their ballots Tuesday, with 113 of 154 issues passing, according to the Ohio School Boards Association (OSBA). That's higher than last year's general election passage rate of 69 percent, when 121 of 175 issues were approved.

According to the Ohio Supreme Court, general election results show nine challengers beating incumbent municipal court judges in eight Ohio counties, while another two races involving incumbents may be subject to recounts. In all, 78 municipal court judgeships were up for election Tuesday in 37 counties. About 36 percent of the races were contested.

Township property tax funding issues for roads, public safety and other services were approved in almost all cases in this week's election, according to the Ohio Township Association (OTA). Just 25 of 492 levies failed to win majority support, OTA said. The majority of those, 18 of them, were seeking additional revenue, while two were replacements, three were renewals and two were bond issues.

Local human service levies performed very well in Tuesday's election with all seven of the behavioral health, all 10 children services levies and all 13 of the senior services levies passing. Eight of 10 developmental disabilities levies passed.

## **ELECTIONS 2020**

Meanwhile, with the polls for the 2019 elections not even closed, eyes were beginning to turn toward the 2020 presidential election. Attorney General William Barr, Secretary of Defense Mark Esper, Acting Secretary of Homeland Security Kevin McAleenan, Acting Director of National Intelligence Joseph Maguire, FBI Director Christopher Wray, U.S. Cyber Command Commander and NSA Director Gen. Paul Nakasone, and CISA Director Christopher Krebs released a joint statement Tuesday saying election security is a top priority for their agencies and the U.S. government. The agencies said that while at this time they have no evidence of a compromise or disruption to election infrastructure that would enable foreign adversaries to prevent voting, change vote counts, or disrupt the ability to tally votes, they said they will continue to vigilantly monitor any threats to U.S. elections.

## **EMPLOYMENT/UNEMPLOYMENT**

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) reported Friday that the nation added 128,000 jobs in October, and the unemployment rate rose slightly to 3.6 percent from 3.5 percent in September. The number of unemployed persons changed little in October, BLS said, and was at 5.9 million.

## **ENERGY**

Sen. Rob McColley (R-Napoleon) and Rep. Bill Reineke (R-Tiffin) announced Wednesday the introduction of legislation that would give local townships the ability to approve or reject large wind farm projects via local referendum. They explained that this bill, which is permissive, "will enable constituents to review and decide if the projects approved by the Ohio Power Siting Board are an appropriate fit for their local area." The House bill is HB401 (Reineke) and the Senate bill is SB234 (McColley).

## GENERAL ASSEMBLY/STATEHOUSE

The Controlling Board Monday approved all 63 items on its agenda, including four items held by lawmakers addressing housing programs and purchases by the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR).

Reps. Diane Grendell (R-Chesterland) and Tavia Galonski (D-Akron), co-chairs of the House Criminal Justice Subcommittee on Criminal Sentencing, announced that the group will hold a regional hearing with invited witnesses at the Case Western Reserve University School of Law on Friday, Nov. 15. The subcommittee will hear about ways the Legislature can protect the public; simplify Ohio's laws; reform prisons; and assist rehabilitated offenders who are looking for a second chance.

The Sunset Review Committee heard from four agencies all testifying on the need for continuation at its Tuesday meeting. They included the Manufactured Homes Advisory Council, Backflow Advisory Board, Electrical Safety Inspector Advisory Committee and College Credit Plus Advisory Committee.

Senate Republicans and Democrats joined forces in a raft of votes in Wednesday's session, including unanimous non-concurrence on House changes to temporary occupational licensing for military families in SB7 (Lehner-Hackett). They parted company on a pair of abortion-related bills, however, with the minority picking up Sen. Stephanie Kunze (R-Hilliard) to oppose legislation criminalizing doctors who fail to inform patients that certain abortion procedures can be reversed. The chamber unanimously passed SB150 (Maharath), creating "Maternal Mental Health Awareness Week; SB181 (Coley), authorizing workforce-education partnerships; SB192 (Craig), directing the Ohio History Connection to name Columbus's Poindexter Village a state historic site, final legislative passage to highway and bridge designations in HB276 (Ghanbari) and House changes to enhanced penalties for promoting prostitution in SB5 (Kunze-Dolan).

The House overwhelmingly passed the four bills on its calendar on Wednesday, three of them unanimously. Meanwhile, House Speaker Larry Householder (R-Glenford) told reporters that he doesn't know why a number of priority House bills have not cleared the Senate. Speaking to reporters after session, Householder said all of the 14 priority bills in the House are important to the chamber, and many of them are important to Gov. Mike DeWine as well. "We've sat around and waited on priority bills for several months, and it doesn't seem like anything is really moving," he said.

Two of the bills passed by the House on Wednesday address military affairs. SB77 (Hoagland-Williams) establishes June 12 as Women Veterans' Day. Also passing unanimously was HB287 (Russo-Perales), which addresses Medicaid home and community-based waiver services for relatives of active duty members. HB285 (Brent-Greenspan), which would make a driver's license amnesty fee reduction program permanent, passed the House 91-1. Rep. Niraj Antani (R-Miamisburg) was the lone "no" vote. Also passing unanimously was HB203 (Lipps), which addresses mobile dental facilities.

On the House's schedule for the end of the year, Speaker Householder said he expects they will work until the week before Thanksgiving, take the week of the holiday off, and then return for another week before breaking for Christmas until the end of the year. He said the House has "a lot of work to do" before the end of the year.

Rep. Scott Ryan (R-Newark) announced Wednesday he'll resign the House on Tuesday, Nov. 12 to join the Ohio Development Services Agency (DSA) as executive director of Ohio Third Frontier. Ryan was first elected to the 71st District seat in 2014, serving prior to that as Licking County treasurer. He was House Finance Committee chairman under former Speaker Ryan Smith (R-Bidwell), who also recently resigned to take another position. Applications to replace Ryan are due to the speaker's office by noon on Monday, Nov. 11.

In other action, the House Health Committee reported out HB230 (Crossman) which designates May as "Brain Cancer Awareness Month"; and HB321 (Lipps-Kelly) which addresses child sexual abuse prevention; the Senate Finance Committee reported out HB2 (Cross-Lepore-Hagan) which creates the TechCred Program; the Senate Higher Education Committee reported out HB16 (Perales) which addresses tuition costs for active duty military and their families; and the Senate Judiciary Committee reported out SB103 (Dolan-Yuko) which addresses the jurisdiction of the Cleveland Housing Court.

## **GOVERNOR**

Gov. Mike DeWine continued to be bullish Monday on the prospects for passage of his proposed changes to Ohio gun laws but acknowledged it could take a while for lawmakers to come around to his ideas, which he called "a uniquely Ohio plan. ... I'm optimistic. I think we're going to get it passed. No one said this is going to be easy, but we're going to get it done," he said.

Joined by the mother of the 18-year-old who died on an Ohio State Fair ride more than two years ago, Gov. Mike DeWine signed "Tyler's Law," which makes a number of revisions to state law to help ensure a similar tragedy never occurs again during a HB189 (Patterson-Blessing) signing event in his ceremonial office at the Statehouse. He was joined by House Speaker Larry Householder (R-Glenford), Senate President Larry Obhof (R-Medina) and Ohio Department of Agriculture (ODAg) Director Dorothy Pelanda, among other state officials. The new law took effect immediately, as it is an emergency measure.

In addition to HB189, the governor's office also announced the signing of SB26 (Kunze), which makes a number of revisions to the state's tax law, including the repeal of the sales tax on feminine hygiene products, also known as the "pink tax." The governor also signed SB24 (Wilson), which establishes the Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementias Task Force.

Gov. Mike DeWine, in honor of the life and service of Dayton Police Detective Jorge DelRio, has ordered that all U.S. and Ohio flags be lowered to half-staff on all public buildings and grounds in Montgomery County, and at the Ohio Statehouse, Riffe Center, and Rhodes Tower in Columbus. Flags are to remain lowered until sunset on Tuesday, Nov. 12.

## **GREAT LAKES**

The harmful algal bloom (HAB) that formed in the Western Basin of Lake Erie this year had a severity index of 7.3, which is a "relatively severe" bloom, according to a 2019 seasonal assessment released by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). The final measurement is almost exactly what researchers from NOAA, Heidelberg University and Ohio State University predicted in July, when the forecast called for a bloom of 7.5 out of 10 on the severity index. Researchers had also said that the total bioavailable phosphorous would be lower than expected

because farmers had so much trouble planting due to heavy rain -- a prediction that also appears to have been accurate.

## **HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES**

The Ohio State Medical Association (OSMA) and other physician groups voiced support Wednesday for a Senate proposal to address so-called "surprise billing" of emergency room patients with out-of-network charges, saying a similar model first adopted in New York and now spreading to other states has shown success. U.S. Acute Care Solutions, the Ohio chapter of the American College of Emergency Physicians (ACEP), Physicians for Fair Coverage (PFC) and Universal Health Care Action Network (UHCAN) of Ohio joined OSMA in testifying to the Senate Insurance and Financial Institutions Committee in favor of SB198 (S. Huffman-Antonio), while numerous others submitted written remarks in support.

## **JUDICIAL**

A divided Ohio Supreme Court has sent the zoning battle over Ohio's surface mining industry back to the appeals court after resolving a single jurisdictional issue: Appellate judges may only address questions of law and not fact in administrative appeals, including whether an expert opinion on nearby property values outweighs a city planning and zoning director's. Trial courts must in turn defer to a zoning commission's findings -- except when it ignores the "preponderance of substantial, reliable and probative evidence." In an opinion joined in full by only two colleagues, Justice Melody Stewart agreed with Portage County's magistrate and common pleas court that the Streetsboro Planning and Zoning Commission had relied on "unsubstantiated speculation about detrimental impact on property values" in denying the state's largest aggregate mining company, Shelly Materials, Inc., a conditional use permit to expand existing operations onto a 225-acres horse farm.

Secretary of State Frank LaRose and Ohioans Against Corporate Bailouts told the Ohio Supreme Court Tuesday they "take no position" on the viability of FirstEnergy Solutions' (FES) nuclear plants and its request for an expedited ruling on the claim HB6 (Callender-Wilkin) energy subsidies are a "tax" immune from referendum.

The Ohio Supreme Court opened a public comment period Tuesday for new and revised probate forms concerning a surviving spouse's automobile selection and a guardian's authorization to sell a ward's house or property. The full text of the amendments can be found at <https://tinyurl.com/y5t9s7dq>.

## **MARIJUANA/HEMP**

The Ohio Board of Pharmacy (OBP) has awarded a dispensary certificate of operation to Pure Ohio Wellness, located at 1875 Needmore Rd. in Dayton. There are now 45 dispensaries legally operating in Ohio.

## **MILITARY AFFAIRS**

While the exact nature of a proposed U.S. "Space Force" as an independent military branch has not been determined yet, the Ohio Air National Guard's 178th Wing is already competing to be part of that mission.



The *Dayton Daily News* reported that was referenced when Col. Kimberly Fitzgerald took command of the Springfield-based 178th Wing on Sunday. Fitzgerald said the unit was "throwing its hat in the ring," and Ohio Assistant Adjutant General for Air James Camp said its intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) group may change to "a space intel mission."

## **NATURAL RESOURCES**

Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) Naturalist Richelle Gatto looks to complete a 10-day, 2,200-mile trip to all 75 Ohio State Parks on Friday, Nov. 8. She began on Wednesday, Oct. 30 in her own park of Wingfoot and will end up back there sometime on Friday. Her tour has highlighted the picturesque views, hidden hiking trails, overnight accommodations, and variety of family-friendly activities available throughout Ohio's state parks system.

The Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) Division of Forestry recently provided more than \$100,000 in fire and EMS equipment to dozens of rural fire departments throughout Ohio.

## **PEOPLE**

Ohio Emergency Management Agency (Ohio EMA) Executive Director Sima Merick was named president of the National Emergency Management Association (NEMA), beginning a one-year term leading the professional organization of emergency managers.

The Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy (ITEP) and Citizens for Tax Justice (CTJ) boards of directors announced the appointment of Amy Hanauer as the groups' new executive director. Hanauer, founder of Policy Matters Ohio (PMO), will assume responsibilities in mid-January 2020.

## **POLLS/STUDIES**

The Ohio Health Issues Poll (OHIP) released survey data indicating that 37 percent of Ohio adults have experienced childhood trauma. OHIP, conducted each year by Interact for Health and the Institute for Policy Research at the University of Cincinnati, measures Ohio adults' opinions about a variety of health-related policies. This year, OHIP asked respondents if, prior to age 18, they'd had any of the three most common forms of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs): divorce or separation of a parent or guardian; death of a parent or guardian; or incarceration of a parent or guardian. Poll results showed that 37 percent of Ohio adults had experienced at least one of these events. Divorce or separation of a parent or guardian was most common, experienced among 29 percent. Death of a parent or guardian (12 percent) and incarceration of a parent or guardian (7 percent) were less common.

## **PUBLIC SAFETY**

As Ohioans turned their clocks back one hour over the weekend to end Daylight Saving Time, the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) and the Ohio State Highway Patrol reminded drivers to look out for pedestrians as it gets darker even earlier, reducing visibility during evening commutes. According to the agencies, 1,134 pedestrians were killed on Ohio roadways from 2009-2018, with over 70 percent of those deaths happening at dawn, dusk or after dark. October, November and December are the deadliest months for people walking in the Buckeye State and account for 34 percent of annual pedestrian deaths since 2009.

The Ohio Collaborative Community-Police Advisory Board (Ohio Collaborative) approved a pursuit standard Wednesday, with board members saying the policy is one of the most important ones for law enforcement agencies. Board members also heard a presentation on the importance of providing support for first responders regarding traumatic experiences, which can arise from one particular incident or a series of less dramatic but routine ones that build up over time. They additionally discussed plans for a model policy, rather than a standard, regarding juveniles.

## **TECHNOLOGY**

A state technology vendor broke its contract terms by outsourcing most work to subcontractors, and the Ohio Bureau of Workers' Compensation (BWC) and Ohio Department of Administrative Services (DAS) flouted procurement rules in selecting the vendor, Inspector General Randall Meyer's office concluded in an investigative report. Acting on an anonymous tip passed on from the auditor's office, investigators started looking in early 2017 at DAS's contracts for work on the Ohio Administrative Knowledge System (OAKS).

A combination of \$2.5 million in federal grant money from the Appalachian Regional Commission and \$1.1 million from the Buckeye Rural Electric Cooperative (BREC) will fund broadband expansion over the next three years, according to information provided by the Ohio Development Services Agency (DSA).

## **TRANSPORTATION/INFRASTRUCTURE**

Creating a hyperloop corridor between Pittsburgh, Columbus and Chicago could create overall economic benefits of \$300 billion over the span of 30 years, with \$19 billion in the form of direct transportation economic benefits, according to a study through the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC). MORPC has been holding a series of public meetings to present its initial findings through its Rapid Speed Transportation Initiative (RSTI). It began in 2013 as an initiative to establish passenger rail service to Chicago from Central Ohio, and now is looking at the feasibility of either a passenger rail line or service through Virgin Hyperloop One (VHO).

The Transportation Review Advisory Committee (TRAC) signed off on nearly \$400 million for major new transportation projects over the next four years on Wednesday. TRAC approved the final funding list during its meeting in Columbus, funding 20 projects out of the 27 applications it received. The funding for the new projects came after lawmakers and Gov. Mike DeWine approved a raise to the state's gasoline tax as part of HB62 (Oelslager), the transportation budget.

## **TREASURER OF STATE**

The Ohio Treasurer of State's Office says the three-year-old STABLE account program has exceeded \$100 million in total contributions as of November. Ohio's STABLE program launched in 2016 after passage of the federal Achieving a Better Life Experience (ABLE) Act. STABLE allows the disabled to save and invest money without losing eligibility for certain means-tested benefits, such as Medicaid and Supplemental Security Income (SSI).

Attorney General Dave Yost's office opined Tuesday that Ohio's now-frozen platform for paying taxes with cryptocurrency should have been chosen via competitive bidding and affirmed by the Board of Deposit, as Treasurer Robert Sprague suspected when he suspended use of the Ohiocrypto.com website.

In conjunction with National Adoption Month, Ohio Treasurer Robert Sprague and Rep. Jon Cross (R-Kenton) Wednesday unveiled the Family Forward initiative, a new linked-deposit program providing low-interest loans for Ohio families seeking to adopt.

## **UTILITIES**

The Public Utilities Commission of Ohio (PUCO) approved the transfer of assets and customer accounts from One Source Energy (OSE) to Northeast Ohio Natural Gas Corp (NEO) Wednesday after the commission ordered One Source to cease operations over regulatory and statutory noncompliance.

## **VETERANS**

In honor of Veterans Day, the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) announced it will offer active duty military members and veterans a 30 percent discount on camping, getaway rentals and state-operated cabin stays during November.

## **LEGISLATIVE ACTIVITY:**

### **SENATE:**

#### **PASSED BY SENATE**

- HB276 HIGHWAY-BRIDGE DESIGNATIONS (Rep. Haraz Ghanbari) To designate multiple memorial highways and bridges.  
Vote 32-0
- SB150 MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS WEEK (Sen. Tina Maharath) To designate the first week of May as "Maternal Mental Health Awareness Week."  
Vote 32-0
- SB155 REVERSAL OF ABORTION (Sen. Peggy Lehner) Regarding pretreatment notice about the possibility of reversing a mifepristone abortion.  
Vote 23-10
- SB181 WORKFORCE-EDUCATION PARTNERSHIPS (Sen. William Coley) To require the Chancellor of Higher Education to create a template for workforce-education partnership programs.  
Vote 33-0
- SB192 DESIGNATE POINDEXTER VILLAGE-HISTORIC SITE (Sen. Hearcel Craig) To require the Ohio History Connection to designate Poindexter Village as a state historic site.  
Vote 33-0
- SB194 VOTER REGISTRATION SYSTEMS (Sen. Michael Rulli) To rename the Board of Voting Machine Examiners as the Board of Voting Equipment Examiners, to require the Board to approve voter registration systems for use in Ohio, and to require a board of elections to decide a protest against a candidate filing within ten days.  
Bill Amended on Floor, Bill Vote 33-0
- SB208 ABORTIONS-LIVE BIRTHS (Sen. Terry Johnson) To require reports to be made after a child is born alive following an abortion or attempted abortion and to establish certain civil or criminal penalties for failing to preserve the health or life of such a child.  
Vote 24-9

## **CONSIDERATION OF HOUSE AMENDMENTS**

- SB5 PROMOTING PROSTITUTION PENALTIES (Sen. Stephanie Kunze, Sen. Matt Dolan) To amend the penalties for promoting prostitution.  
Vote 33-0, Senate does concur
- SB7 TEMP STATE OCCUPATIONAL LICENSES-MILITARY (Sen. Peggy Lehner, Sen. Robert Hackett) Regarding temporary state occupational licenses for members of the military and their spouses.  
Vote 0-33, Senate does not concur

## **HOUSE:**

### **PASSED BY HOUSE**

- HB203 MOBILE DENTAL FACILITIES (Rep. Scott Lipps) To specify requirements for the operation of mobile dental facilities.  
Vote 92-0
- HB285 LICENSE REINSTATEMENT AMNESTY (Rep. Dave Greenspan, Rep. Juanita Brent) To establish a permanent Driver's License Reinstatement Fee Debt Reduction and Amnesty Program.  
Vote 91-1
- HB287 MEDICAID WAIVER-MILITARY (Rep. Allison Russo, Rep. Rick Perales) Regarding Medicaid home and community-based waiver services for relatives of active duty military.  
Vote 91-0
- SB77 WOMEN VETERANS' DAY (Sen. Frank Hoagland, Sen. Sandra Williams) To designate June 12 as "Women Veterans' Day."  
Vote 92-0