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Week in Review
March 21, 2016

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 U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) issued new recommendations for prescribing opioid medications for chronic pain. "The 'CDC Guideline for Prescribing Opioids for Chronic Pain, United States, 2016' will help primary care providers ensure the safest and most effective treatment for their patients," the agency said.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE

A panel of law enforcement authorities, representatives from state agencies and developmental disability advocates from across the state gathered for its quarterly meeting last Thursday at

Attorney General (AG) Mike DeWine's office for an advisory discussion regarding Crime Victims with Disabilities.

ECONOMY

Secretary of State Jon Husted said that 9,401 new entities filed to do business in Ohio during February 2016. Husted said that is 1,483 more businesses than filed during February 2015, when 7,918 entities were formed.

ELECTIONS 2016

A Franklin County judge ruled that Secretary of State Jon Husted misconstrued the Ohio Revised Code section concerning allowing 17-year-old Ohioans to cast a ballot in the presidential race, and said that any such votes cast last Tuesday should count. After initially saying he would appeal, Husted later recanted, explaining that because the 10th District Court of Appeals would not hear his appeal until the day before the election and "because even if we were to prevail, there is no effective way to responsibly make the changes necessary to implement an orderly election." Instead, he directed all county boards of elections to comply with the court order.

According to the secretary of state's office, 3,137,109 ballots were cast in the primary election last Tuesday, good for a 41.48 percent turnout. It was the second highest turnout in a primary election in Ohio, coming in behind the 2008 presidential primary when 3,603,523 ballots were cast and 46.04 percent of the electorate turned out as Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton battled for the Democratic presidential nomination.

Gov. John Kasich scored his first win of the primary season, claiming an 11-point victory over businessman Donald Trump in Ohio, which the governor said will catapult him to the nomination and eventually to the presidency. On the Democratic side, former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton defeated U.S. Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-VT) 57 percent to 43 percent in Ohio.

In an election that nationally seems to be about going against the status quo, Ohio voters went with what they know. Only one incumbent in the Ohio House, Senate, or U.S. Congress was knocked off, though an unexpected candidate emerged in the race to succeed retired U.S. House Speaker John Boehner (R-West Chester). The defeated incumbent was Rep. Tony Burkley (R-Payne), who lost to retired businessman Craig Riedel in the GOP primary. Warren Davidson, a veteran, won the race to succeed Boehner.

Former Gov. and U.S. Rep. Ted Strickland handily won the Democratic Party nomination for U.S. Senate, garnering 65 percent of the vote. Challenger P.G. Sittenfeld received 22 percent of the vote, while Kelli Prather got 12 percent.

About three-quarters of school funding issues passed, according to information from the Ohio School Boards Association. Fifty-two of 68 issues on the ballot were approved.

ENVIRONMENT

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has announced the availability of up to \$260 million for partner proposals to improve the nation's water quality, combat drought, enhance soil health, support wildlife habitat and protect agricultural viability. The funding is being made available through USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service's (NRCS) Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCP). Applicants must be able to match the federal award with private or local funds, according to the department.

FEDERAL

President Barack Obama nominated a federal appellate judge from the District of Columbia circuit court last Wednesday to fill the vacancy on the U.S. Supreme Court left by Justice Antonin Scalia, who died in February. Judge Merrick Garland, chief judge of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit, received Obama's nomination last Wednesday morning in the White House's Rose Garden.

The U.S. Senate passed legislation to expand opioid abuse prevention and education efforts, along with making naloxone more available to law enforcement and providing treatment to the drug-addicted and incarcerated. U.S. Sen. Rob Portman (R-OH), a lead sponsor of the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act (CARA), has championed the effort during stops at Ohio recovery centers and has touted the legislation's national anti-drug group and congressional bipartisan support. It passed the chamber 94-1.

GOVERNOR

The governor made the following appointments during the week:

- Andrew M. Thomas of Ironton (Lawrence County) to the Ohio Statewide Independent Living Council for a term beginning March 11, 2016 and ending Oct. 26, 2017.
- Ellen Grinsfelder of Logan (Hocking County) and Todd Mesek of Lakewood (Cuyahoga County) reappointed to the TourismOhio Advisory Board for terms beginning March 11, 2016 and ending Sept. 27, 2018.
- Robert D. Gordon of Gallipolis (Gallia County) reappointed to the Ohio Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday Commission for a term beginning March 14, 2016 and ending Dec. 3, 2018.
- Jason M. Dolin of Bexley (Franklin County) reappointed to the Governor's Council on Juvenile Justice for a term beginning March 14, 2016 and ending Oct. 31, 2017.
- Jill N. Tayfel of Brecksville (Cuyahoga County) to the Governor's Council on Juvenile Justice for a term beginning March 14, 2016 and ending Oct. 31, 2017.

- Matthew Starner of Zanesville (Muskingum County) to the Hearing Aid Dealers and Fitters Licensing Board for a term beginning March 14, 2016 and ending Jan. 25, 2020.
- Dr. Patricia Haines of Xenia (Greene County) reappointed to the Commercial Dog Breeding Advisory Board for a term beginning March 15, 2016, and ending March 12, 2019.

MARIJUANA

The House Medical Marijuana Task Force continued its hearings during a marathon session last Thursday, which lasted late into the evening. Members heard testimony from legal experts, medical experts, employers, law enforcement, people suffering from ailments that could be treated with medical marijuana and others.

PEOPLE

Terry Collins, the former director of the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction under Gov. Ted Strickland, died from an apparent heart attack last Thursday. He was 63.

UTILITIES

NiSource, parent of Columbia Gas, announced that President Pablo Vegas of American Electric Power (AEP) of Ohio will become Columbia Gas Group's next president as well as executive vice president of NiSource.

WORKERS' COMPENSATION

The Kasich Administration tallied \$4.3 billion in customer savings at the Ohio Bureau of Workers' Compensation (BWC) last Thursday as its board of directors gave formal approval to another \$113 million rate cut for private employers. The total includes more than \$1 billion in premium reductions for public and private employers, \$1.3 billion in prospective billing credits, \$2 billion in customer rebates, and more than \$40 million in workplace safety grants.

LEGISLATIVE ACTIVITY

No legislative activity to report.