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Week in Review
April 18, 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.

AUDITOR OF STATE

The office of Auditor of State Dave Yost said more than 70 public officials and employees attended the office's first seminar on how to prevent fraud or detect it as soon as possible. Held in Perrysburg, the seminar was the first of seven seminars Yost's office is holding across the state. A second seminar in Marietta was also held this week.

FY17-18 CAPITAL APPROPRIATIONS

Legislative leaders unveiled the \$2.6 billion capital budget last Tuesday and announced plans for quick approval, with votes in both chambers hoped for by month's end. Major categories of construction spending are K-12 education, higher education, local road and water infrastructure, parks, dams and natural areas, prisons, state transportation facilities, and community projects.

CORRECTIONS

The Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction (DRC) announced that it will be closing the state's 10 prison farms and will sell off the land to fund new rehabilitation programs, a move immediately criticized by the union representing prison employees.

Recidivism, re-integration and respect were recurring themes during a forum that included Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction (DRC) Director Gary Mohr and other experts from the state's correctional institutions. "Life After Prison: A Community Effort" was the title of the Columbus Metropolitan Club's weekly luncheon, which was moderated by Alvis President and CEO Denise Robinson and included panel members Mohr, Ohio State University sociology professor Paul Bellair and Keith Stevens, who is president and CEO of his own company that provides IT consulting, staff augmentation and professional development services.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE

Prosecuting attorneys from across the state reiterated their opposition to eliminating the civil forfeiture process during last Wednesday's Senate Government Oversight and Reform Committee meeting. Those testifying said SB 236 (Jordan) would harm law enforcement and help drug dealers keep their ill-gotten gains. They all said problems with the system are exaggerated and should not lead to its removal from the Ohio Revised Code.

EDUCATION

The Ohio School Facilities Commission opened applications for a \$25 million funding pool to assist charter schools with constructing, buying or renovating classroom space. The application deadline is 4 p.m. on Wednesday, June 15.

The State Board of Education's Accountability Committee voted to approve a new state report card measure to show schools' staffing levels in various professions, an outgrowth of last year's controversial repeal of the "five of eight" staffing rule. Under the measure, which will be included in the 2015-2016 report card released later this year, the state will report staffing ratios by enrollment in positions ranging from art and music teachers to nurses and counselors to audiologist and interpreters, among others. The data will be presented alongside the statewide ratio for comparison purposes.

The Ohio Department of Education (ODE) released the names of the 44 applicants for the state superintendent position, as well as search firm Ray and Associates' recommended candidates, who include Bob Sommers, former education adviser to Gov. John Kasich, and Tina Thomas-Manning, Reynoldsburg's superintendent and a former associate superintendent at ODE.

ELECTIONS 2016

Ted Strickland's U.S. Senate campaign announced that it has raised over \$1.5 million in the first quarter, and has \$2.7 million cash on hand. The campaign said it received 29,000 contributions and over 90 percent of the contributions received were under \$50.

U.S. Sen. Rob Portman's campaign said it raised \$2.4 million in the first quarter and has \$13.5 million on hand.

House Speaker Cliff Rosenberger (R-Clarksville) presided over an event to introduce the slate of Republican House candidates to the public, touting their experience and saying he believes they will prevail no matter what happens at the top of the ticket in November. With a record 65 seats to defend in the fall, the caucus expressed confidence in not only holding its majority, but expanding it as well, highlighting candidates in Franklin, Lorain and Huron counties, as well as the work of freshmen in competitive districts, including Reps. Nathan Manning (R-North Ridgeville), Kyle Koehler (R-Springfield), Steve Arndt (R-Elmore), and Jeff Rezabek (R-Dayton).

ENVIRONMENT

While Senate Minority Leader Joe Schiavoni (D-Boardman) commended Gov. John Kasich for his administration's mid-biennium review (MBR) proposal to address lead contamination in public water systems, he said his legislation does more to ensure the mistakes of Sebring are not repeated. "Gov. Kasich outlined an MBR bill that addresses many of the concerns that arose from the situation and provides much needed financial assistance to communities to help replace aging lead service lines and fixtures," Schiavoni told the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee last Tuesday during sponsor testimony on his SB 269.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY/STATEHOUSE

The House seated Bill Dean as the new 74th District representative at its session last Tuesday to replace Bob Hackett, who moved to the Senate after the retirement of Sen. Chris Widener. Dean had won the Republican primary for the seat.

The House State Government Committee adopted several changes to towing regulatory bill HB 341 (Young- Sweeney) and reviewed another likely amendment meant to resolve disputes between insurers and towing companies. Representatives for towing operators and insurance companies both spoke in favor of a proposal to create the Towing and Quick Clear Board, which would issue decisions in cases where insurers dispute the fees tow operators charge for release of a vehicle.

After Wednesday's session, Senate President Keith Faber (R-Celina) responded to news that Sen. Bill Seitz (R-Cincinnati) is planning to introduce legislation to extend the green energy "freeze" of 130 (Balderson). "I generally support the extension of the freeze as long as we have the U.S. Supreme Court case on the Obama coal regulations," Faber said, referring to the Clean Power Plan now on hold as a multi-state challenge proceeds at the appellate level.

GOVERNOR

The governor made the following appointments during the week:

- Raymond "Boom Boom" Mancini of Youngstown (Mahoning County) appointed to the Ohio Athletic Commission for a term beginning April 13, 2016, and ending Sep. 2, 2018.
- Kelly K. Bensman of Toledo (Lucas County) to the Materials Management Advisory Council for a term beginning April 14, 2016, and ending July 1, 2018.

- Dr. Ashok Das of Mason (Warren County) reappointed to the State Dental Board for a term beginning April 11, 2016, and ending April 6, 2020.
- Dr. Burton W. Job of Akron (Summit County) to the State Dental Board for a term beginning April 11, 2016, and ending April 6, 2018.
- Dr. Billy J. Anderson Jr. of Findlay (Hancock County) to the State Dental Board for a term beginning April 11, 2016, and ending April 6, 2019.
- Jon W. Rettig of Columbiana (Columbiana County) to the Board of Embalmers and Funeral Directors for a term beginning April 11, 2016, and ending June 30, 2020.

HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

The Governor's Office of Health Transformation (OHT) in cooperation with the Ohio Department of Medicaid (ODM) announced that effective July 1, 2016, the state is revamping its Medicaid eligibility system for disabled Ohioans to streamline and simplify it. Authorized in the FY16-17 budget, HB 64 (R. Smith), the changes mean that individuals found eligible for the federal Supplement Security Income (SSI) program will automatically receive Ohio Medicaid benefits. This means they no longer have to pursue a separate, second eligibility determination for Medicaid.

HOUSING

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) announced that it has awarded the city of Xenia a \$500,000 grant to develop four affordable housing rental units above a historic storefront. HUD said the housing will increase living options for low-income residents.

INSURANCE

The ranking minority members on both the House and Senate insurance committees called for public hearings on the potential mergers of four of the five national health insurance companies in the United States. Rep. Heather Bishoff (D-Blacklick) and Sen. Edna Brown (D-Toledo) made their request that the Ohio Department of Insurance (ODI) hold public hearings on any proposed mergers during a morning news conference. ODI, however, said the department typically does not hold hearings on such matters, suggesting instead those interested submit written comments to the department.

MARIJUANA

The House moved quickly to consider legislation based on the recommendations of the House Medical Marijuana Task Force, naming Rep. Kirk Schuring (R-Canton) chair of a new select committee that will meet three times a week to review the bill. "I would hope that we could get it over to the Senate by the end of April so they can have an ample opportunity to do what they need to do. In May, we'd like to have it out of the General Assembly and on to the governor's desk to be signed at the end of May." The bill, HB 523, was introduced last week by Rep. Stephen Huffman (R-Tipp City) and the rest of the select committee members were announced including Schuring, Huffman and Reps. Tim Brown (R-Bowling Green), Marlene Anielski (R-Walton Hills), Ryan Smith (R-Gallipolis), Lou Terhar (R-Cincinnati), Dan Ramos (D-Lorain), Nick Celebrezze (D-Parma) and Christie Bryant Kuhns (D-Cincinnati).

The Ohio Ballot Board approved the latest medical marijuana proposal as a single subject. Secretary of State Jon Husted, chairman of the board, first announced the resignation of former Sen. Nina Turner and the appointment of Sen. Mike Skindell (D-Lakewood), followed by his swearing in.

MID-BIENNIUM REVIEW

Gov. John Kasich's administration unveiled the next portion of the mid-biennium review last Tuesday, this one with a focus on prescription drug abuse and proposing reforms aimed at strengthening oversight by the Ohio Board of Pharmacy, encouraging responsible treatment and preventing overdoses. The reforms were announced during an event with Lt. Gov. Mary Taylor and other members of the Governor's Cabinet Opiate Action Team (GCOAT) at CompDrug Inc. in Columbus.

Department of Developmental Disabilities (DODD) Director John Martin presented his agency's mid-biennium review (MBR) policy proposals to the House Finance Committee. Rep. Ryan Smith (R-Bidwell), the committee chairman, said he'll ask the Health and Human Services Subcommittee to take up further hearings on the bill. Martin joined Rep. Ron Amstutz (R-Wooster), sponsor of HB 483, to review the changes, which they first introduced last month.

UTILITIES

American Electric Power named Julie A. Sloat president and chief operating officer of its AEP Ohio utility unit, effective Monday, May 2. Sloat currently is AEP's senior vice president and treasurer. Sloat, 47, who replaces Pablo A. Vegas, will have responsibility for all aspects of electric service for AEP Ohio's 1.5 million customers. She will report to Robert P. Powers, executive vice president and chief operating officer. Vegas took a position at NiSource.

LEGISLATIVE ACTIVITY

HOUSE

PASSED BY HOUSE

HB113 CPR-GRADUATION REQUIREMENT (Rep. Cheryl Grossman, Rep. Nathan Manning) To require instruction in cardiopulmonary resuscitation and the use of an automated external defibrillator.

Vote 85-8

HB425 RELIGIOUS EXPRESSION-STUDENTS (Rep. Bill Hayes) Regarding student religious expression.

Vote 73-22

HB434 DAY DESIGNATION (Rep. Nan Baker) To designate March as "Fibromuscular Dysplasia Awareness Month."

Vote 93-0

SENATE

PASSED BY SENATE

HB151 STALKING-TELECOMMUNICATIONS HARASSMENT (Rep. Marlene Anielski) To expand the offenses of menacing by stalking and telecommunications harassment, to prohibit a person from knowingly causing another person to believe that the offender will cause physical harm or mental distress to a family or household member of the other person, to increase the penalty for assault when the victim is a volunteer firefighter, and to correct a cross reference in the theft statute to special purchase articles.

Vote 33-0

HB233 REDEVELOPMENT DISTRICTS (Rep. Kirk Schuring) To authorize municipal corporations to create downtown redevelopment districts and innovation districts for the purposes of promoting the rehabilitation of historic buildings, creating jobs, encouraging economic development in commercial and mixed-use areas, and supporting grants and loans to technology-oriented and other businesses.

Amended on the Floor, Vote 33-0

SB27 WORKERS' COMPENSATION-FIREFIGHTER CANCER (Sen. Tom Patton) To provide that a firefighter who is disabled as a result of specified types of cancer is presumed for purposes of the laws governing workers' compensation and the Ohio Police and Fire Pension Fund to have incurred the cancer while performing official duties as a firefighter.

Vote 32-1