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RH RESOURCES

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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.

AGING

The Ohio Department of Aging (ODA) inducted a dozen residents -- eight individuals and two couples -- into the state's Senior Citizens Hall of Fame on Thursday, recognizing their professional, advocacy and philanthropic accomplishments. "Older Ohioans' diversity, values, insight and experiences throughout their lives have helped to shape their communities," said Ursel McElroy, director of ODA, in a statement. "When older adults connect with their neighbors and have opportunities to create and contribute, our state is better for it."

ATTORNEY GENERAL

Attorney General Dave Yost has announced victims' assistance awards to Ohioans ranging from police to public servants to a Cincinnati fifth-grader. "Justice is not a system. It happens on purpose, one life at a time, and victims' advocates know those lives. They know each one, because they touch them one by one and help them to heal," Yost said. "I thank our award recipients and all victims' advocates for their work to help survivors of crime."

CHILDREN/FAMILIES

Ohioans who turned over custody of their children to the state as the only viable method to get costly, complex care for their children urged the Senate Finance Committee to make sure other families don't have to experience what they did.

Family members like grandparents, aunts and uncles taking care of children instead of the parents is better overall for the family and the health of the children than foster care, but they need more guidance and support from the state government, proponents of HB14 (Boyd-Baldrige) told the House Health Committee Tuesday.

Ohio had slightly fewer reported missing children, fewer abductions by strangers and fewer attempted abductions in 2018 but also a statistically significant increase in incidents considered potentially dangerous, according to the latest annual report from the state's Missing Children Clearinghouse. The state had 19,879 reported missing children last year -- 54 percent of which were girls -- compared to 20,043 missing children in 2017. The Ohio Attorney General's Office says 98.1 percent were recovered safely in 2018, a slight improvement over the previous year.

CRIME AND PUNISHMENT

Prosecutors and sheriffs pushed back against drug sentencing reforms Wednesday in the Senate Judiciary Committee, saying the changes would hamper law enforcement practices and strip drug courts of an effective tool for steering people to recovery. Portage County Prosecutor Victor Vigliucci, president of the Ohio Prosecuting Attorneys Association, and Warren County Sheriff Larry Sims, representing the Buckeye State Sheriffs Association, testified before the committee. They were joined by Kristen Hughes, a woman in recovery who said only after going to prison did she realize she needed to turn her life around.

DISASTERS

Gov. Mike DeWine declared a state of emergency in Greene, Mercer and Montgomery counties on Tuesday following the serious damage caused by tornadoes Monday night. The emergency declaration will allow state agencies to provide resources beyond their normal authority under the direction of the Ohio Emergency Management Agency (Ohio EMA), according to the governor's office. The declaration will also allow the Ohio Department of Administrative Services (DAS) to suspend state purchasing requirements to support recovery efforts and obtain needed resources such as water and generators more quickly and efficiently.

The state asked Thursday that the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) visit Ohio to assess damage from this week's tornadoes and heavy storms in ten counties: Auglaize, Darke, Greene, Hocking, Mercer, Miami, Montgomery, Muskingum, Perry and Pickaway.

EDUCATION

Young children whose parents read them five books a day enter kindergarten having heard about 1.4 million more words than kids who were never read to, a new study found. This "million-word gap" could be one key in explaining differences in vocabulary and reading development, said Jessica Logan, lead author of the study and assistant professor of educational studies at Ohio State University.

Sen. Peggy Lehner (R-Kettering) said Wednesday she does not have a full plan in the wings for replacing the academic distress law, saying a report circulating around Capitol Square is a collection of notes from meetings of "thought leaders" she asked to consider alternatives to the state takeover framework. Lehner, who chairs the Senate Education Committee, said the point of a hearing Wednesday and others planned for coming weeks is to develop such a plan with the input of stakeholders. "I would just encourage everyone to chill on this idea of a plan," she said.

The Senate Finance Committee Wednesday heard extensive testimony from school administrators and education groups asking for inclusion of the "Fair School Funding Plan" in the biennial budget, HB166 (Oelslager). Proponents lauded the plan for its itemization of student-teacher and student-staff ratios to determine the cost of educating the "typical" Ohio student, as well as the plan's elimination of the current "cap and guarantee" funding system, which proponents said unfairly skews funding among districts in similar wealth brackets.

ENERGY

The House passed energy policy measure HB6 (Callender-Wilkin) on a 53-43 bipartisan vote Wednesday, with 10 Democrats joining to support it and 17 Republicans dissenting. The House Rules and Reference Committee had reconvened in the morning to add final amendments that impose "anti-windfall" protections on nuclear subsidies; require an annual third-party audit of the program; require FirstEnergy Solutions (FES) or successor owners of the nuclear plants to maintain business operations in Ohio; bar FES from seeking lower property values for the two plants; and grandfather into the clean-air program solar facilities of 50 megawatts (MW) or more that gain Ohio Power Siting Board (OPSB) approval by Saturday, June 1.

Gov. Mike DeWine reiterated Thursday his support for continued operation of nuclear power plants in Ohio but called the House-passed legislation to subsidize them "a work in progress" and said he doesn't want to restrain development of wind and solar generation.

GAMING/GAMBLING

Small businesses such as bars and bowling alleys should be allowed to offer sports gambling if the state legalizes the activity, hospitality industry representatives said Thursday. During opponent testimony on HB194 (Greenspan-Kelly) in the House Finance Committee, Ohio Licensed Beverage Association (OLBA) Executive Director Andrew Herf said he likes many provisions of the bill, including its regulatory structure under the Ohio Lottery Commission (OLC) and the 10 percent tax.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY/STATEHOUSE

Hannah News interview series with freshman legislators profiled Rep. Don Jones (R-Freeport), who came to Columbus after more than two decades of teaching to set a course for the state in education. "I didn't like where we were headed. Everything I've ever been involved in in my life, either I didn't like how it was going or I didn't like the direction it was headed, so I got involved and tried to change the course of direction."

The Sunset Review Committee on Tuesday considered testimony from the Ohio Children's Trust Fund, Ohio Commission on Hispanic and Latino Affairs and the Ohio New African Immigrants Commission.

In addition to passing energy policy measure HB6 (Callender-Wilkin), Wednesday's House session included passage of HB137 (Kelly-Vitale), requiring employers to provide earning and deduction statements to employees; and HR77 (Perales-Weinstein), urging that Ohio military construction projects begin as originally scheduled. Republicans also seated former lawmaker and appellate judge Diane Grendell to replace former Rep. Sarah LaTourette, who took a job in the DeWine administration.

The Senate Wednesday unanimously passed legislation that would allow courts to order completion of a community service program in lieu of paying a reinstatement fee in license suspension cases. Sen. Sandra Williams (D-Cleveland), sponsor of SB68 (Williams), said her bill will create a community service waiver program, calling it "mutually beneficial" for both the individual and the state, allowing drivers to be on the road legally rather than without a driver's license.

Thursday's House session included passage of HB79 (Oelslager), the Industrial Commission budget, and HB168 (Arndt), regarding liability for purchasers of previously contaminated properties.

Rep. Bernadine Kennedy Kent (D-Columbus) filed a complaint with House Speaker Larry Householder's (R-Glenford) office this week over an incident with two Democratic Caucus staffers, saying she won't return to her office or the Statehouse until the complaint is addressed.

In other legislative action, the House Transportation and Public Safety Committee reported out HB227 (R. Smith), creating an "ALS Awareness" license plate; HB241 (Zeltwanger-Miranda), a road naming bill; and SB52 (Gavarone), to create a civilian cyber security reserve force; the House Finance Committee reported out SB4 (Rulli-Kunze), to add school construction funding; the House State and Local Government reported out HB133 (Perales-Weinstein), requiring provision of temporary professional licenses to military members and families who move to Ohio for active duty assignments; the Housing Aging and Long-Term Care Committee reported out SB24 (Wilson), to establish the Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementias Task Force; and the House Criminal Justice Committee reported out HB136 (Hillyer), restricting the death penalty for seriously mentally ill offenders.

GREAT LAKES

More than five years after the initial Great Lakes and Mississippi River Interbasin Study (GLMRIS) was released, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) has approved a plan to prevent invasive species like Asian carp from reaching the Great Lakes. USACE Commanding General Todd Semonite signed the recommended plan, sending the project to Congress for authorization.

The Lake Erie Bill of Rights (LEBOR) should be ruled void and unenforceable because it conflicts with federal and state law, Ohio Attorney General Dave Yost said in a complaint seeking to nullify the Toledo charter amendment.

HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Gov. Mike DeWine announced the membership of the Governor's Working Group on Reviewing the Medical Board's Handling of the Investigation Involving Richard Strauss, and the panel held its first meeting Wednesday. The group will investigate the medical licensing agency's handling of an investigation into the late Ohio State University sports and student center doctor, who is accused of sexual abuse against scores of students. Strauss died in 2005.

Proponents touting the successes of group-based care for expectant mothers appeared before the House Health Committee Tuesday, saying their approach to prenatal health not only improves infant mortality rates but also closes the racial gap between white and black infants. Proponents of HB11 (G. Manning-Howse) appeared before the House Health Committee to also touch on provisions concerning prenatal dental care, tobacco cessation and lead.

Franklin University and Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities (OOD) showcased Thursday for Gov. Mike DeWine new navigation technology for people with blindness, saying it aligns to his purpose of declaring Ohio a disability inclusion state. BlindSquare uses a combination of Bluetooth beacons and GPS technology to offer directional instructions in buildings and outside. The app complements the traditional navigational skills people with blindness use with audio cues about where a door is or in which direction an office lies, for example.

LIBRARIES

Pulitzer Prize-winning author David McCullough will be making an appearance at the Ohio Statehouse in June as part of the Ohioana Library's 90th anniversary celebration. The event will be held on Monday, June 3 at 11:30 a.m. in the Statehouse Atrium.

MARIJUANA/HEMP

The Prevention Action Alliance (PAA), a statewide anti-drug organization, is lobbying the General Assembly to create a cannabis education campaign. Jean-Philippe Dorval, manager of legislative affairs and administrative services for PAA, told *Hannah News* that the legislative proposal would require the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (OhioMHAS) to create the program in consultation with the Ohio Department of Health (ODH) and the Ohio Department of Agriculture (ODAg).

MILITARY AFFAIRS

Wright Patterson Air Force Base has been selected to host the F-35 Hybrid Product Support Integrator (HBSI) Organization, Outgoing Secretary of the Air Force Heather Wilson said Wednesday. When fully staffed, the F-35 Hybrid Product Support Integrator Organization will have 440 people, with most located at Wright Patterson. It is already operational in Crystal City, VA, where it was established in 2016 as part of the F-35 Joint Program Office. There are currently HBSI personnel at 16 locations globally.

NATURAL RESOURCES

Girl Scouts can visit an Ohio state park with friends and family during a special weekend on July 13-14, according to the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR). "As a former Girl Scout leader, I'm thrilled we are able to partner with the Girl Scouts so they have the opportunity to visit our state parks," ODNR Director Mary Mertz said in a release. "Spending time outdoors is the best way to learn about and appreciate our state's natural resources." ODNR will be offering special activities at Alum Creek, Caesar Creek, Hocking Hills, Independence Dam and Portage Lakes state parks. Activities will vary based on location.

Applications will soon be accepted for controlled deer and waterfowl hunts for the 2019-2020 season, according to the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) Division of Wildlife. The

application period opens Saturday, June 1 and runs through Wednesday, July 31, ODNR said in a release.

The Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) Division of Parks and Watercraft is seeking to fill 18 full-time positions for natural resources officers. Applicants must be 21 years old, possess a valid Ohio driver's license and be certified as an Ohio peace officer. Other qualifications include completing a background check, psychological exam and passing a drug screen, as well as meeting swim and physical fitness standards. Officers must reside within 45 miles of their work location. Applications may be submitted at careers.ohio.gov. The state of Ohio is an equal opportunity employer and provider of Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) services. Individuals may apply for the positions through Sunday, June 2.

A new National Park Service (NPS) report shows that nearly 2.1 million visitors to Cuyahoga Valley National Park (CVNP) spent \$36.8 million in nearby communities in 2018. Spending supported 541 jobs in the area and had a cumulative benefit to the local economy of \$53.3 million, according to a CVNP release.

PENSIONS

The State Teachers Retirement System (STRS) of Ohio lacked the legal basis to freeze annual inflationary increases in pension benefits, two retirees argue in a federal court filing that seeks class action status for more than 100,000 others. STRS Trustees voted in April 2017 to freeze the payment of 2 percent cost-of-living increases to retirees, citing a need to shore up long-term finances. Trustees included provisions in their resolution to consider resumed payments no later than the next five-year investment experience study.

PEOPLE

Shumaker Advisors Ohio LLC announced Thursday that Jared Holt has joined the Ohio team as director of government relations. The firm said Holt brings nine years of experience in state government and lobbying to his new role. His experience ranges from political campaigning, constituent advocacy and policy development to lobbying on behalf of higher education and the Ohio Treasury. Most recently, he held the positions government relations director for University of Toledo and legislative liaison for Ohio Treasurer Robert Sprague.

PUBLIC SAFETY

The Ohio State Highway Patrol reported 12 deaths on Ohio's roadways during the 2019 Memorial Day weekend, according to provisional statistics. In 2018, there were 18 traffic deaths during the Memorial Day weekend. Three of this year's fatalities result from not wearing a safety belt when available, two were pedestrians, one was OVI-related and one was not wearing a helmet. The four-day reporting period began Friday, May 24 and ran through Monday, May 27.

REDISTRICTING/REAPPORTIONMENT

The U.S. Supreme Court Friday put a lower court ruling ordering Ohio to redraw its congressional district maps by June 14 on hold pending appeal. The Court also stayed a ruling in a Michigan redistricting case as well. A three-judge panel ruled earlier this month that Ohio's congressional maps created as a part of 129-HB369 (Huffman) are an "unconstitutional partisan gerrymander." The

judges ordered the state to redraw the maps by Friday, June 14, and refused to delay that decision pending the state's appeal.

STATE GOVERNMENT

The Ohio Facilities Construction Commission (OFCC) on Thursday announced the appointment of current Chief Legal Counsel and Ethics Officer Jon Walden as the interim director for the commission. Earlier this month, the commission accepted the retirement of Executive Director David Williamson, effective Saturday, June 1.

VETERANS

Ohio Attorney General Dave Yost announced Friday that he was joining a nationwide group of attorneys general urging the U.S. Department of Education (USDOE) to forgive all loans for veterans permanently disabled by their service. "There is nothing our nation could possibly do for these brave men and women that is ever going to be repayment enough," Yost said. "This is one area in which we can guarantee them the relief they so richly deserve -- and that they already are entitled to under the law."

WORKERS' COMPENSATION

A police officer, firefighter or emergency medical worker who is diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) without an underlying physical condition would be eligible to receive compensation and benefits through the Ohio Bureau of Workers' Compensation (BWC) under the newest version of its budget. The House Finance Committee on Wednesday accepted a substitute bill for HB80 (Oelslager) including that provision and several other changes. No testimony was heard on Wednesday, but the committee was scheduled to hear all testimony on the legislation on Thursday, May 30.

WORKFORCE

The House Economic and Workforce Development Committee accepted substitute versions of two workforce credential bills Wednesday, with neither HB2 (Cross-Lepore-Hagan) nor HB4 (Richardson-Robinson) receiving debate. Vice Chair Jena Powell (R-Arcanum) offered both sub bills and explained them to the committee. Both are among the House's slate of priority legislation and were introduced earlier this month.

LEGISLATIVE ACTIVITY:

SENATE:

PASSED BY SENATE

- SB68 LICENSE REINSTATEMENT-COMMUNITY SERVICE (Sen. Sandra Williams)
To allow a court to authorize completion of a community service program in lieu of payment of driver's license reinstatement fees when the court determines that an offender cannot reasonably pay the fees.
Vote 32-0

HOUSE:

PASSED BY HOUSE

- HB79 INDUSTRIAL COMMISSION BUDGET (Rep. Scott Oelslager) To make appropriations for the Industrial Commission for the biennium beginning July 1, 2019, and ending June 30, 2021, and to provide authorization and conditions for the operation of Commission programs.
Vote 89-1
- HB168 AFFIRMATIVE DEFENSE-HAZARDOUS SUBSTANCES (Rep. Steve Arndt) To establish an affirmative defense to a release or threatened release of hazardous substances from a facility for certain bona fide prospective purchasers.
Vote 90-0
- HB6 CLEAN AIR PROGRAM (Rep. Jamie Callender) To create the Ohio Clean Air Program, to facilitate and encourage electricity production and use from clean air resources, to facilitate investment to reduce the emissions from other generating technologies that can be readily dispatched to satisfy demand in real time, and proactively engage the buying power of consumers in this state for the purpose of improving air quality in this state.
Vote 53-43
- HB137 EMPLOYEE EARNINGS AND DEDUCTIONS (Rep. Brigid Kelly, Rep. Nino Vitale) To require an employer to provide earnings and deductions statements to each of the employer's employees.
Vote 94-2

ADOPTED BY HOUSE

- HR77 MILITARY CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS (Rep. Casey Weinstein, Rep. Rick Perales) To urge that Ohio military construction projects receiving funding from the United States Department of Defense begin as originally scheduled to maintain national security and military readiness.
Vote 92-3
- HR150 76TH DISTRICT-DIANE GRENDALL (Rep. Larry Householder) Relative to the election of Diane V. Grendell.
Vote 58-0