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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

Ohio will be receiving more than \$2.9 million from the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) to address the opioid crisis, part of nearly \$60 million in awards that the agency is giving to state and local programs.

According to the U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of Ohio Benjamin Glassman's office, \$1 million of the grants will go to the Ohio Supreme Court for data-driven responses to prescription drug misuse, and another \$700,000 will go to the Court for the Family Drug Court Statewide System Reform Implementation Program.

AGING

The Speaker's Task Force on Alzheimer's and Dementia heard testimony from professionals and the public, comprising a broad look at the state of aging in Ohio. Testimony included proposals to

expand access to in-home care and programs for individuals suffering from Alzheimer's or dementia to express themselves through music or art to achieve positive mental health outcomes.

ATTORNEY GENERAL

The Ohio Attorney General's Office has announced a string of indictments related to a "large-scale" drug trafficking ring with ties to Morgan, Washington, Muskingum and Franklin counties. Investigators with the Washington Morgan Noble Major Crimes Task Force -- part of the attorney general's Ohio Organized Crime Investigations Commission -- began investigating the drug trafficking organization more than a year ago, uncovering alleged trafficking of cocaine, heroin and prescription pills.

The Ohio Attorney General's Office announced Tuesday that an undercover operation aimed at reducing demand for sex trafficking has led to the arrests of nine men, including one suspect accused of arranging a sexual encounter with a person he allegedly believed was a juvenile.

BALLOT ISSUES

The Ohio Elections Commission Thursday dismissed two complaints filed by supporters of Issue 2, the Drug Price Relief Act, but sent a third to a full hearing after being unable to get sufficient votes to dismiss it.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE

The Ohio Criminal Sentencing Commission (OCSC) has been issued the challenge of considering whether state and local authorities can work across branches of government to lower prison and jail populations -- the major push behind Ohio's renewed collaboration with the Council on State Governments (CSG).

A bipartisan group of Ohio lawmakers are hoping to turn tragedy into progress with a new criminal justice overhaul bill named in memory of Reagan Tokes, an Ohio State student raped and murdered in February. The 'Reagan Tokes Act' would make major changes Ohio's criminal justice system, including allowing for indeterminate prison terms for first- or second-degree felonies and specifically violent third-degree felony offenses; allowing reduced minimum sentences for good behavior and increased sentences up to the maximum for bad behavior; establishing a reentry programs for released inmates not accepted to halfway houses; and setting restrictions for offenders released from prison who are subject to ankle monitoring, including inclusionary and exclusionary zones, among other items.

EDUCATION

Public school teachers are much more likely to take days off from school when compared to their charter school counterparts, according to a recent report from the Fordham Institute. The study, "Teacher Absenteeism in Charter and Traditional Public Schools," targets "chronic absenteeism" as a popular indicator of school quality that is being included in state plans for the implementation of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). Ohio has included this indicator in its plan as well.

The state Superintendent of Public Instruction Paolo DeMaria told the Columbus Metropolitan Club Wednesday that the future of public education in Ohio rests on the "personalization of the educational experience." He cautioned, however, that digital technology can never replace human interaction in the development of "real-world readiness skills."

The state's largest online charter school owes the state nearly \$19.3 million more, according to a full-time-equivalency (FTE) review for the 2016-2017 school year conducted by the Ohio Department of Education (ODE). That amount is in addition to the \$60 million found to be owed by the Electronic Classroom of Tomorrow (ECOT) for the 2015-2016 school year because of disputed enrollment numbers. The Ohio Supreme Court recently accepted ECOT's appeal of the \$60 million finding.

ELECTIONS 2018

Rob Richardson, a former University of Cincinnati (UC) Board of Trustees chairman, launched his campaign for Ohio Treasurer Wednesday, making him the first Democrat in the race. Franklin County Auditor Clarence Mingo and Rep. Robert Sprague (R-Findlay) have announced campaigns for the Republican nomination for treasurer.

Democratic gubernatorial candidate Joe Schiavoni announced his jobs plan Thursday as well as a website to support the plan, <https://joeforjobs.com>. Schiavoni said his plan, which he said will support workers and small business, is based on years of research, discussions with local leaders and legislative efforts as a state senator. He said it is based on several bills he has introduced while in the Ohio Senate, including bills to boost career technical education, rebuild crumbling underground infrastructure, invest in green technology projects, support small businesses and workers, and many others.

U.S. Rep. Jim Renacci (R-Wadsworth) is the first to go on the air in the 2018 gubernatorial race, calling his opponents in the Republican primary "the Columbus fat cats." The ad uses actors dressed like cats and portraying Secretary of State Jon Husted, Attorney General Mike DeWine and Lt. Gov. Mary Taylor, claiming they have been "lying around" as Gov. John Kasich expanded Medicaid under the Affordable Care Act and supported Common Core.

ENERGY

Senate members heard a bipartisan push Wednesday to reestablish shorter wind turbine setbacks and restart wind energy development in Ohio. In separate legislation, Sens. Cliff Hite (R-Findlay) and Mike Skindell (D-Lakewood) told the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee that the state has missed out on an estimated \$4.2 billion in economic development due to setbacks implemented in 2014.

ENVIRONMENT

The Ohio Environmental Protection Agency (Ohio EPA) has issued its 13th notice of violation against Rover Pipeline LLC after finding the company responsible for another spill. Three days after receiving the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission's (FERC) permission to resume construction, Rover spilled contaminants including soap wastewater and soil/sediment into a tributary of Irish Creek in Carroll County, according to Ohio EPA.

FEDERAL

U.S. Sen. Rob Portman (R-OH) told reporters Thursday that Republican efforts to reform the tax code may have a better chance at bipartisan support than the repeatedly failed attempts to repeal and replace the Affordable Care Act, as there are public hearings and the regular committee process for the tax reform. That should have been done on health care, Portman said. Portman discussed the legislative effort, his own actions on addressing online sex trafficking and the Lake Erie algal bloom and the North Korean crisis, including the death of Ohioan Otto Warmbier following his captivity in North Korea and allegations he was tortured.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY/STATEHOUSE

Senate President Larry Obhof (R-Medina) said lawmakers will likely be including more funding for counties dealing with the lost revenue from the Medicaid managed care organizations (MCO) in an upcoming budget fix, providing an additional \$50 million for counties over the next biennium, with another \$30 million if revenues come in above estimates.

The Speaker's Task Force on Education and Poverty met Thursday to hear presentations from State Superintendent Paolo DeMaria and Ohio Education Policy Institute Consultant Howard Fleeter on the current situation of economically disadvantaged students in Ohio schools. DeMaria underlined the fact that poverty affects many different aspects of a child's life, all of which have an impact on their ability to learn. He said addressing this systemic problem will require developing new techniques and abandoning the "this is how it's always been done" approach.

The House Transportation and Public Safety Committee will conduct a seven-month long study on autonomous and connected vehicles, Chairman Doug Green (R-Mt. Orab) announced.

Rep. George Lang (R-West Chester), the newly seated representative for the 52nd House District, was appointed to the House Community and Family Advancement Committee and the House Criminal Justice Committee.

GOVERNOR

Appointments made during the week include the following:

- Mike Brooks of Nelsonville (Athens County) reappointed to the Hocking Technical College Board of Trustees for a term beginning Sept. 22, 2017, and ending Aug. 26, 2020.
- Phillip L. Trueblood of Lima (Allen County) to the Northeast Ohio Medical University Board of Trustees for a term beginning Sept. 22, 2017, and ending Sept. 21, 2026.
- Kristen Scott of Dublin (Franklin County) reappointed to the Credit Union Council for a term beginning Sept. 23, 2017, and ending Sept. 22, 2020.
- Robin D. Thomas of Bedford (Cuyahoga County) to the Credit Union Council for a term beginning Sept. 23, 2017, and ending Sept. 22, 2020.
- Bert Dawson of East Liverpool (Columbiana County) reappointed to the State Board of Registration for Professional Engineers and Surveyors for a term beginning Sept. 25, 2017, and ending Sept. 24, 2022.
- Emily J. Passias of Dublin (Franklin County), Stephen D. Anthony of Lakewood (Cuyahoga County) and Stephen A. Schumaker of Springfield (Clark County) to the Ohio Peace Officer Training Commission for terms beginning Sept. 25, 2017, and ending Sept. 20, 2020.

- Pandora A. Shaw-Dupras of Chillicothe (Ross County) and Matthew L. Rubin of Toledo (Lucas County) reappointed to the Ohio Commission on Service and Volunteerism for terms beginning Sept. 26, 2017, and ending April 21, 2020.
- Michael R. Young of Belle Valley (Noble County) reappointed to the Zane State College Board of Trustees for a term beginning Sept. 27, 2017 and ending July 31, 2020.
- Jodi L. Burroughs of Grove City (Franklin County), Brian Ross of Galena (Delaware County) and Charles D. Young of Springfield (Clark County) reappointed to the TourismOhio Advisory Board for terms beginning Sept. 28, 2017 and ending Sept. 27, 2020.

HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

The Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (OhioMHAS) awarded \$6 million in grants to state-certified community-based mental health and addiction service providers, with priority given to agencies serving the state's deaf and hard of hearing population. Providers were eligible to receive up to \$100,000 to put towards workforce recruitment and retention efforts, with award notices being sent to 61 providers statewide.

MARIJUANA

Central State University (CSU) is the second institution of higher education planning to conduct medical marijuana laboratory testing at their facilities. The Ohio Department of Commerce (DOC) received applications from CSU and Hocking College, according to the Medical Marijuana Control Program (MMCP).

POLITICS

The Ohio Democratic Party announced Monday that it will hold its second gubernatorial debate along with its annual state dinner in Columbus next month. Current candidates Sen. Joe Schiavoni (D-Boardman), Dayton Mayor Nan Whaley, former state Rep. Connie Pillich and former U.S. Rep. Betty Sutton will debate at the Columbus Convention Center on Sunday, Oct. 29.

REDISTRICTING/REAPPORTIONMENT

A four-member, bipartisan working group got off to a rocky start with Democrats saying they don't want to undermine efforts by Fair Districts = Fair Elections which is targeting the November 2018 election for its proposal. House and Senate leaders have said their intent is to have something on the ballot in May 2018. So far, members of the working group are Rep. Kirk Schuring (R-Canton), Sen. Matt Huffman (R-Lima) and Sen. Vernon Sykes (D-Akron). Schuring and Huffman are co-chairs.

WORKERS' COMPENSATION

The Ohio Bureau of Workers' Compensation (BWC) Board of Directors gave final approval Thursday to the latest insurance rate cut for government employers and reviewed numbers showing opioid prescriptions for injured workers have dropped by roughly half under the Kasich administration. In her annual review, BWC Administrator/CEO Sarah Morrison also received high praise from the board for her first year on the job. Members voted to approve a 6.1 percent rate cut for school districts, municipalities and other local jurisdictions, bringing total reductions for public employers to 33.9 percent -- \$434 million in real numbers -- since 2011.

WORKFORCE

Applications are now being accepted for the Ohio Incumbent Workforce Training Voucher Program through the Ohio Development Services Agency (DSA). This program provides Ohio businesses funding to improve the skills of their workforce.

LEGISLATIVE ACTIVITY:

HOUSE

No House activity to report.

SENATE

PASSED BY SENATE

- HB6** RECORDS PUBLICATION FEES (Rep. John Barnes, Jr.) To prohibit a person who publishes or disseminates criminal record information from soliciting or accepting a fee to remove, correct, modify, or refrain from publishing or otherwise disseminating the information and to provide criminal and civil remedies for a violation of the prohibition.
Vote 33-0
- SB71** ADAMH BOARD CONTRACTS (Sen. Gayle Manning) To allow a board of alcohol, drug addiction, and mental health services to authorize its executive director to execute contracts valued at \$50,000 or less without the board's prior approval.
Vote 33-0
- SB144** STATE REHABILITATION SERVICES CONSOLIDATION (Sen. Dave Burke) To abolish the Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities Commission, Consumer Advisory Committee, and Governor's Council on People with Disabilities and to establish a state rehabilitation services council known as the Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities Council.
Vote 33-0

ADOPTED BY SENATE

- SR59** SOO LOCKS FEDERAL UPGRADE (Sen. Matt Dolan, Sen. Frank LaRose) To encourage the President and the Congress of the United States and the United States Office of Management and Budget to support plans to upgrade the Soo Locks at Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan, and encourage the United States Army Corps of Engineers to take expeditious action in preparing an Economic Reevaluation Report.
Vote 33-0