



GOVERNMENTAL POLICY GROUP, INC. RH RESOURCES

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Week in Review

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CONTENTS

ADDICTION/SUBSTANCE ABUSE	2	GOVERNOR	9
AGRICULTURE	2	HIGHER EDUCATION	10
ATTORNEY GENERAL.....	2	INAUGURATION.....	10
BUDGET, F.Y. 22-23	2	JUDICIAL.....	11
BUDGET, F.Y. 24-25	3	LOBBYISTS	12
CORONAVIRUS.....	3	MARIJUANA/HEMP	12
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT.....	3	NATURAL RESOURCES.....	12
EDUCATION.....	3	PEOPLE.....	13
ELECTIONS.....	5	POLITICS.....	13
EMPLOYMENT/UNEMPLOYMENT	5	SECRETARY OF STATE.....	13
ENERGY/UTILITIES	5	STUDIES/POLLS.....	14
FEDERAL.....	6	TOBACCO/SMOKING	14
GAMING/GAMBLING.....	6	TREASURER OF STATE.....	14
GENERAL ASSEMBLY	7	WORKFORCE.....	14



ADDICTION/SUBSTANCE ABUSE

The OneOhio Recovery Foundation is still waiting to find out how much settlement funds they will receive to address the opioid epidemic, OneOhio Interim Executive Director Kathryn Whittington said Wednesday, noting that information should come by the end of February or early March. OneOhio Board Chair Larry Kidd asked members to begin thinking about distribution percentages now, saying he expects a "healthy debate" during meetings in February and March on how much will go to statewide efforts and how much will go to the regions. Whittington said the foundation should begin receiving funds for distribution in April, and plans to announce the grant cycle in May. The foundation would receive grant submissions in June, and review them in July and August, according to Whittington's timeline. Grants would be approved in September and disbursement would begin in October, she said.

AGRICULTURE

The Ohio Department of Agriculture (ODAg) announced that it is restructuring its marketing division to expand outreach and marketing opportunities for Ohio's food and agricultural businesses. Under the restructuring, the agency will establish a director of marketing and add the new Ohio CAN program to the division. Christy Eckstein, a 20-year ODAg employee who currently serves as the executive director of the Ohio Grape Industries Committee, will assume the role as director of marketing.

The Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) and ODAg are offering incentives to farmers and landowners to enroll in conservation practices through the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Farm Service Agency (FSA) Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) projects. CREP projects aim to reduce sediment and nutrient loading into both the Lake Erie and Scioto River watersheds.

ATTORNEY GENERAL

Attorney General (AG) Dave Yost delivered his second inspirational speech in as many inaugurations Monday, leaving policy ruminations for the days ahead as Ohio's top prosecutor and defense lawyer. After "another fair, free election by a free people in the greatest nation in the history of the world," Yost said, the day was an opportunity to consider the country's "fractious" cultural and political debates. He said electoral success like his own is not a time to "help friends and punish enemies," acknowledging at the same time that his federalist convictions had secured a second public mandate. "But we use the authority granted by the voters to do what we promised because it is right, not because we are keeping -- or settling -- a score," the AG said. "Let's not pretend that we can all just hold hands and sing Kumbaya about everything that's happening in our country. We have serious, principled disagreements."

BUDGET, F.Y. 22-23

Tax collections exceeded forecasts by about \$32 million in December, taking the FY23 surplus past half a billion dollars ahead of Gov. Mike DeWine's introduction of his next budget proposal at the end of January, according to preliminary data from the Office of Budget and Management (OBM). Strong income tax and Commercial Activity Tax (CAT) collections offset a slight miss in sales tax revenues to bring total collections 1.4 percent ahead of estimates. For the fiscal year so far, tax collections are up \$510.3 million or 3.8 percent versus estimates, reaching almost \$14 billion. The

income tax generated \$1.03 billion versus estimates of \$997.6 million, a performance 3.9 percent or \$39 million over forecasts. The CAT yielded \$15.8 million versus \$12.3 million expected.

The \$6 billion spending bill that passed by the General Assembly during the lame duck session will go into effect without any line-item vetoes, Gov. Mike DeWine said Friday, Jan. 6. Speaking with reporters in the governor's ceremonial office following his cabinet swearing-in ceremony, DeWine said he signed 134-HB45 (Roemer-West) without blocking any provisions because the legislation included many of his administration's top priorities, some of which were only included because of a compromise with legislative leaders.

BUDGET, F.Y. 24-25

Ohioans and their tax preparers could more easily file and pay personal and school district income taxes online through a new portal under plans envisioned in the Ohio Department of Taxation's (ODT) FY24-25 budget request, now under consideration for inclusion in Gov. Mike DeWine's third biennial budget proposal. Among ODT priorities outlined in the budget request are completion of Project NextGen, the name for the new Ohio Tax System for administering the personal income tax and school district income tax.

CORONAVIRUS

The number of new COVID-19 cases reported by the Ohio Department of Health (ODH) ticked downward over the past seven days, from 13,895 on Jan. 5 to 10,188 Thursday, Jan. 12. ODH also reported a decline in the number of new hospitalizations, from 709 to 646. ICU admissions and deaths showed little change, with 45 admissions and 105 deaths reported Jan. 5 and 49 admissions and 106 deaths in the Thursday data. Since the pandemic began, there have been 3.33 million cases, 134,839 hospitalizations, 14,810 ICU admissions and 41,139 deaths. Other data released by ODH Thursday showed that 1.69 million people have now received the updated bivalent vaccine in Ohio, including 36,490 in the past week. Additional numbers show there were 3,593 initial vaccinations, 3,429 completed vaccinations, 5,650 first booster shots and 19,037 second booster shots in the past seven days.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

JobsOhio recently signed an agreement with Intel to reimburse up to \$25 million in training costs for the company's Central Ohio semiconductor project. The workforce grant is part of a previously announced set of incentives offered by JobsOhio totaling up to \$150 million, in addition to state and local government support. JobsOhio also signed eight other grant and loan agreements in December.

EDUCATION

The Ohio Department of Education (ODE) closed out 2022 by publishing a raft of cost studies, some done internally and some by contractors, to provide more data for lawmakers considering the numerous facets of the K-12 funding formula. The General Assembly launched several studies via 133-SB310 (Dolan), the FY21-22 capital appropriations budget, and 134-HB110 (Oelslager), the FY22-23 biennial budget. Most are related to the Cupp-Patterson school funding formula, aka the Fair School Funding Plan, which supporters have said is meant to be based on the actual costs of providing the elements of a quality education. That formula is in its second year of a planned six-year phase-in period, although its continuation in the coming biennial budget FY24-25 is far from

guaranteed. Senate President Matt Huffman (R-Lima), whose caucus developed an alternative to Cupp-Patterson during HB110 deliberations but ultimately relented, has stated recently that no General Assembly can bind its successors. The studies, released in November and December, are as follows:

- College Credit Plus Results and Effectiveness Study
- Study of Ohio's Funding Approach for Community Schools
- Ohio Community E-Schools Cost Study
- Educational Service Center Study
- Funding Pilot Program for Online DOPR Schools Report
- Ohio English Learner Cost Study
- Gifted Funding Accountability Recommendations
- Ohio Gifted Education Incentives Study
- Special Education in Ohio: Best Practices, Costs and Policy Implications.

Former high school history teacher Paul LaRue won election Tuesday as president of the State Board of Education (SBOE), succeeding Charlotte McGuire, who was re-elected to represent District 3 in the fall. LaRue edged out District 7 member Christina Collins in an 11-7 vote. LaRue, recently reappointed to the board by Gov. Mike DeWine for another four-year term, is a retired teacher from Washington Court House who won numerous teaching awards, including being a finalist for Ohio's Teacher of the Year honor.

Board Vice President Martha Manchester was re-elected to that role in a three-way contest with Collins and District 5 board member Brendan Shea. Collins won the plurality of seven votes to Manchester's six and Shea's five in the first round of voting, but in a second-round head-to-head with Collins she picked up all Shea's support, winning 11-7.

Applications are open until Wednesday, Feb. 1 for a new tax credit program meant for businesses that offer work-based learning experiences to Ohio students. At the end of 2021, lawmakers passed and Gov. Mike DeWine signed 134-SB166 (Reineke), a broad career-technical education measure that included creation of a non-refundable income tax credit for employers equal to 15 percent of wages paid to a student participating in a career-technical education program. Up to \$5 million in credits is available per biennium, and the law limits the amount issued per year to any employer to \$5,000 per student. To get the credit, an employer will need a tax credit certificate from ODE. Information about the credit and application process is at <https://tinyurl.com/2p9949bt>.

The Buckeye Association of School Administrators (BASA) announced the hiring of Paul Imhoff as director of governmental relations. He replaces Kevin Miller, who left to become superintendent of Licking Heights Local Schools. Imhoff has had a 33-year career in education, most recently as superintendent of Upper Arlington City Schools. Prior to that he was superintendent of Mariemont City Schools and assistant superintendent in Madeira City Schools. He also spent time as a high school and middle school teacher.

ELECTIONS

Late Friday afternoon, Jan. 6, the governor announced the signing of 134-HB458 (Hall), an elections bill that includes a new voter photo ID requirement. "Elections integrity is a significant concern to Americans on both sides of the aisle across the country. At the same time, I have long believed that Ohio does a good [job] of administering elections, as we have provided ample opportunities to cast votes while avoiding the problems we have seen in recent federal elections in other states," DeWine said in a statement. "Legislators included our suggestions to expand access to valid photo IDs and to maintain Ohioans' ability to cast absentee ballots without the more restrictive identification requirements that were debated," he said. "I believe with the enactment of the new election integrity provisions in HB458, this matter should be settled, and I do not expect to see any further statutory changes to Ohio voting procedures while I am governor."

The ink on 134-HB458 (Hall) was barely dry Friday when a number of groups challenged it in federal court later that day. Plaintiffs in the federal lawsuit, which include the Northeast Ohio Coalition for the Homeless, Ohio Federation of Teachers, Ohio Alliance for Retired Americans, and Union Veterans Council, argue the omnibus elections bill "imposes needless and discriminatory burdens on Ohioans' fundamental right to vote." It claims the law violates the First and 14th amendments of the U.S. Constitution. The lawsuit says the provisions of the law "are a solution in search of a problem," noting defendant Secretary of State Frank LaRose's comments praising Ohio's elections system as a gold standard in the nation and its performance in 2020 and 2022. Nonetheless, the suit states, lawmakers "have pressed on in their efforts to restructure the state's election system in ways that make it significantly harder for lawful voters -- particularly young, elderly, and Black Ohioans, as well as military service members and other Ohioans living abroad -- to exercise their fundamental right to participate in the state's elections."

EMPLOYMENT/UNEMPLOYMENT

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) said Friday that total nonfarm payroll employment increased by 223,000 in December, with the national unemployment rate falling from 3.7 to 3.5 percent. The number of unemployed persons also declined from 6 million to 5.7 million. BLS said that among the major worker groups, the unemployment rate for Whites fell to 3 percent during the month while rates for adult men, adult women, teenagers and other racial groups saw little change. The number of long-term unemployed (those jobless for 27 weeks or more) declined by 146,000 to 1.1 million in December. This measure is down from 2.0 million a year earlier. The long-term unemployed accounted for 18.5 percent of all unemployed persons.

ENERGY/UTILITIES

The Public Utilities Commission of Ohio (PUCO) largely corroborated PJM Interconnection's report linking vegetation "grow-in" to June outages affecting more than 600,000 American Electric Power (AEP) of Ohio customers. PUCO's report states that although AEP appeared to have complied with its commission-approved "right-of-way vegetation control" -- one of seven required maintenance plans including power line inspection -- "there is room for improvement." "Staff has concerns about AEP Ohio's transmission vegetation management program, particularly those outage instances that were coded as grow-in," the staff report notes. "Most of the outages were ultimately caused by vegetation coming into contact with the power lines."

Amanda Finn, director of external affairs at Ascent Resources, has been selected the 38th chairman of the Ohio Oil & Gas Association (OOGA) for 2023, becoming the youngest individual to serve in this role in the association's 75-year history, as well as the first woman and first shale operator, the group announced. Finn previously served as vice chairman and treasurer of OOGA and chaired of the association's Government Affairs Committee. In 2019, she earned OOGA's Oilfield Patriot Award, which recognizes an individual who has made significant contributions to protect, promote and advance the common interests of Ohio's crude oil and natural gas industry.

Sustainable Ohio Public Energy Council (SOPEC) and AEP Energy announced Wednesday that SOPEC is now AEP Energy's exclusive government electric aggregator for new Ohio communities seeking aggregation. SOPEC is a nonprofit council of governments that launched with three communities in 2014 and has grown to become one the largest electric aggregators in Ohio and a "national leader in renewable energy," according to AEP Energy. SOPEC now operates statewide in 22 political subdivisions.

Eight individuals Thursday submitted applications for the open seat on the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio (PUCO) due to the resignation of Vice Chair Beth Trombold. Trombold announced her resignation a week ago effective Feb. 10, two months prior to the end of her term, which was set to expire in April. The PUCO Nominating Council had already opened the applications for the seat just before the holidays. Among the applicants are former Rep. Jeff Crossman, a Democrat who lost his bid for attorney general last year, and current Rep. Mike Skindell (D-Lakewood). Also applying for the seat is current Ohio Casino Control Commission Chair June Taylor, a Democrat.

FEDERAL

Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) Director Matt Damschroder Tuesday announced that changes in federal law mean that February will be the last month of emergency Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) allotments. These are extra monthly payments the federal government created in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. In general, according to the department, "it ensures all households receive the maximum allotment for their household size. Beginning in March, recipients will receive only their one, normal monthly payment." According to ODJFS, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is a federally funded program meant to supplement the food budget of families in need so they can purchase healthy food and move toward self-sufficiency. Eligibility, as well as the normal monthly allotments, vary based on factors such as income and household size.

GAMING/GAMBLING

The Ohio Casino Control Commission (OCCC) is setting an example for the rest of the country's sports betting regulators to follow, according to Problem Gambling Network of Ohio (PGNO) Executive Director Derek Longmeier. During a phone interview with *Hannah News*, Longmeier said Ohio appears to be the first state to seriously enforce legal requirements and restrictions regarding sports gaming advertising, pointing to recent fines against Barstool, DraftKings, BetMGM and Caesars. "I am not aware of any other state who has had fines associated with marketing ...," Longmeier said. "It seems like Ohio is really the first state to tackle this, and I commend them for that ... I think that speaks to the commission's really honoring their role as regulators, and I also commend the governor for his actions and comments that this really isn't OK in Ohio."

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Rep. Derek Merrin (R-Monclova) said Wednesday that Rep. Jason Stephens (R-Kitts Hill) is the duly elected speaker of the Ohio House, but Merrin is the leader of the Ohio Republican Caucus. Merrin and most of the House members who voted for him for speaker held their own caucus meeting for an hour-and-a-half at the Statehouse Wednesday before emerging and walking as a group to the House clerk's office to submit a new version of 134-HJR6 (Stewart), the proposed constitutional amendment that would require at least 60 percent of the vote for passage of a constitutional amendment. Nearly three dozen members of the Republican caucus attended the meeting in person, and the group said a few others attended by phone and video.

The new version of 134-HJR6 (Stewart) will require amendments to the Ohio Constitution on the ballot to receive at least 60 percent of the vote in order to pass. Rep. Brian Stewart (R-Ashville) told reporters the new version is the same as HJR6 with two additional changes based on feedback. He said it will require signatures to come from all 88 counties instead of just 44, and it would also eliminate the cure period for ballot committees to collect more signatures should their initial submission fall short.

Brittney Colvin, recently a deputy director of the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR), is the new chief of staff for the Ohio House, Speaker Jason Stephens (R-Kitts Hill) said Friday. Colvin has also worked as director of policy and legislative affairs at the Ohio Department of Education, legislative affairs director at ODNR, Senate legislative aide and policy director under former Senate President Bill Harris.

The first 21 Senate bills of the 135th General Assembly were introduced Wednesday, with SB1 (Reineke) -- as expected -- reviving the K-12 governance overhaul provisions that failed to pass as 134-SB178 (Reineke). As before, SB1 would rename the Ohio Department of Education (ODE) as the Department of Education and Workforce; create the position of director of education and workforce; and reform the functions and responsibilities of the State Board of Education and the Superintendent of Public Instruction.

The Senate session also saw introduction of three other bills on education topics: SB11 (O'Brien), the "Parent Educational Freedom Act," previously 134-SB368; SB14 (Hoagland), which would expand eligibility for veterans to be employed as teachers without licenses, previously offered as 134-SB361; and SB17 (Wilson), which would incorporate "free market capitalism content" into the high school financial literacy and entrepreneurship standards and model curriculum. It was previously offered as 134-SB365.

Other bills introduced Wednesday include the following:

- **SB2** (Schuring) authorizes certain subdivisions to designate areas where residential property is wholly or partially exempt from property taxes. It is similar to 134-SB329 (Schuring).
- **SB3** (Schuring) creates the Ohio Community Revitalization Program and authorizing nonrefundable income tax credits for undertaking community projects. It is similar to 134-SB344 (Schuring).

- **SB4** (Schuring) modifies film and theater tax credits and authorizes a credit for capital improvement projects relating to the film and theater industries. It is similar to 134-SB341 (Schuring).
- **SB5** (Schuring-Manning) establishes a two-year Workforce Voucher Program. It is similar to 134-SB340 (Schuring-Manning).
- **SB6** (Schuring) addresses environmental, social and corporate governance policies with respect to the state retirement systems, Bureau of Workers' Compensation, and state institutions of higher education. It is similar to 134-SB367 (Schuring).
- **SB7** (Schuring) designates April as "Powerboat Safety Month" and increases safety education funding. It is similar to 134-SB331 (Schuring).
- **SB8** (Schuring-Lang) generally exempts motor vehicle dealers from liability for the contents of a third-party motor vehicle history report. It is similar to 134-SB342 (Schuring-Lang).
- **SB9** (S. Huffman-Schuring) revises the law related to medical marijuana. Sen. Steve Huffman (R-Tipp City) previously offered 134-SB261, which would have changed the medical marijuana law.
- **SB10** (Blessing) and **SB20** (Roegner) both incorporate Internal Revenue Code changes into Ohio law.
- **SB12** (Hoagland) establishes a veteran-owned business enterprise certification program and allows duly certified veteran-owned business enterprises to compete for purchases set aside by state agencies. It is similar to 134-SB291 (Hoagland).
- **SB13** (Hoagland) allows a person to distill, serve and ship homemade spirituous liquor without a liquor permit.
- **SB15** (Hoagland) authorizes a permanent motor vehicle registration option with a waiver of specified fees and taxes for retired military veterans under the Military License Plate Program. It is similar to 134-SB362 (Hoagland).
- **SB16** (Wilson) alters the law governing immunity from liability for donations of perishable food. It is similar to 134-SB333 (Wilson).
- **SB18** (Wilson) modifies the law governing data storage and notifications issued by state agencies. It is similar to 134-SB279 (Wilson).
- **SB19** (Wilson) amends the law regarding the non-recourse civil litigation advance business. It is similar to 134-SB94 (Wilson).
- **SB21** (McColley-Reynolds) is similar to 134-HB286 (Seitz), with the exception of an HB286 provision "to provide that a civil action to challenge a state administrative order issued in a state of emergency be brought in the Court of Claims." Gov. Mike DeWine previously vetoed that bill, saying it was "simply too broad."

GOVERNOR

Christine Morrison, House chief of staff under former Speaker Bob Cupp (R-Lima), is Gov. Mike DeWine's new director of cabinet affairs, the governor's office said Friday. Morrison previously was House budget director under Speaker Larry Householder (R-Glenford) and served as deputy director of the Office of Budget and Management and Controlling Board president during the Kasich administration, among other experience in state government. She succeeds LeeAnne Cornyn, who was recently promoted to deputy chief of staff. DeWine also named Kara B. Wentz as director of children's initiatives; and Scott Partika as policy director, succeeding Anne Vogel, whom DeWine appointed to lead the Ohio EPA after the retirement of Laurie Stevenson as director. He also appointed Haylee Dunahay director of boards and commissioners.

Appointments made during the week include the following:

- Mark Alan Romick of New Matamoras (Monroe Co.) to the Belmont College Board of Trustees for a term beginning Jan. 6, 2023, and ending May 12, 2025.
- John James Lisy Jr. of Cleveland Heights (Cuyahoga Co.) reappointed to the Chemical Dependency Professionals Board for a term beginning Jan. 6, 2023, and ending Dec. 23, 2025.
- Amr Elaskary of Monclova (Lucas Co.) to the Accountancy Board for a term beginning Jan. 6, 2023, and ending Oct. 20, 2029.
- Tasha Sheipline of Wapakoneta (Auglaize Co.), Jennifer S. Wolfe of Westerville (Franklin Co.), and Kenji Christopher Prince of Columbus (Franklin Co.) reappointed to the State Cosmetology and Barber Board for terms beginning Jan. 6, 2023, and ending Oct. 31, 2027.
- Robert J. Hedger of Pickerington (Fairfield Co.) to the Ohio Athletic Commission for a term beginning Jan. 6, 2023, and ending Sept. 2, 2024.
- Jon David Holt of Dayton (Montgomery Co.), Robert James Hankins of Canton (Stark Co.) and Peter Lawson Jones of Shaker Heights (Cuyahoga Co.) reappointed and Kristie Lynn Davis of Cincinnati (Hamilton Co.) appointed to the Ohio Arts Council for terms beginning Jan. 6, 2023, and ending July 1, 2027.
- Teri L. LaJeunesse Schenck of Xenia (Greene Co.) to the Ohio Criminal Sentencing Commission for a term beginning Jan. 6, 2023, and ending Aug. 21, 2023.
- Vernon P. Stanforth of Washington Court House (Fayette Co.) reappointed to the Ohio Peace Officer Training Commission for a term beginning Jan. 4, 2023, and ending Sept. 20, 2025.
- Wynette P. Carter-Smith of Springboro (Warren Co.) reappointed to the Ohio Peace Officer Training Commission for a term beginning Jan. 4, 2023, and ending Sept. 20, 2025.
- Malcum J. Patton of Richwood (Union Co.) to the Ohio Organized Crime Investigations Commission for a term beginning Jan. 6, 2023, and ending Sept. 3, 2025.
- Maria Lauren Haberman of Columbus (Franklin Co.) to the Public Benefits Advisory Board for a term beginning Jan. 6, 2023, and ending June 30, 2024.

- William Brett Burgett of Granville (Licking Co.) and Kevin Andrew Hoggatt of Columbus (Franklin Co.) to the Governor's Executive Workforce Board for terms beginning Jan. 6, 2023, and continuing at the pleasure of the governor.
- Steven Philip Regoli of Worthington (Franklin Co.) appointed to the Board of Building Appeals for a term beginning Jan. 6, 2023, and ending Oct. 13, 2023.
- Stephanie McCloud of Reynoldsburg (Franklin Co.) to the Capitol Square Review and Advisory Board for a term beginning Jan. 6, 2023, and continuing at the pleasure of the governor.
- Thomas W. Johnson of Columbus (Franklin Co.) reappointed to the Environmental Review Appeals Commission for a term beginning Jan. 6, 2023, and ending Oct. 22, 2028.
- David O. Regula of Navarre (Stark Co.) reappointed to the Transportation Review Advisory Council for a term beginning Jan. 6, 2023, and ending June 29, 2027.
- Michelle Primm of Akron (Summit Co.), Roberto Vazquez of Upper Arlington (Franklin Co.) and Neal Jonathan Barkan of Columbus (Franklin Co.) reappointed to the Motor Vehicle Dealers Board for terms beginning Jan. 6, 2023, and ending Oct. 4, 2025.

HIGHER EDUCATION

Ohio State University (OSU) has been awarded a \$3.8 million grant from the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) to support its "higher-power" and "rapid charging" electric vehicle (EV) battery project. The grant is part of \$42 million the department is awarding to 12 projects through its Electric Vehicles for American LowCarbon Living (EVs4ALL) program, which aims to expand domestic EV adoption by developing better-performing batteries.

INAUGURATION

Sticking to familiar themes during his second inaugural address on Monday, Gov. Mike DeWine said Ohio will become the best state in the country when it comes to addressing mental health and addiction issues. "We are ridding Ohio of the stigma -- yes the stigma -- that comes with addiction and mental illness," DeWine said in the Statehouse Rotunda following his ceremonial swearing-in, which was administered by his son, Ohio Supreme Court Justice Pat DeWine. The governor had been officially sworn in on Sunday, Jan. 8 at his family home in Cedarville.

DeWine signed the first five executive orders of his second term shortly after being officially sworn in Sunday night. They include the following:

- **Executive Order 2023-01D**, which adds "status as a working mother" and rescinds Executive Order 2019-05D, a similar order that DeWine signed minutes into his first term.
- **Executive Order 2023-02D**, which enables state employees to serve as mentors to Ohio youth in need. The Ohio Department of Administrative Services (DAS) director is instructed to create a policy providing at least one hour of paid leave per pay period, or 26 hours per calendar year, for that purpose.
- **Executive Order 2023-03D**, which cites cybersecurity concerns in prohibiting state use of apps, platforms and websites which "engage in surreptitious data privacy and cybersecurity practices" and "are known to directly or indirectly act as an intelligence gathering mechanism for the

[Chinese Communist Party]." Those include TikTok, WeChat and 18 other apps and platforms. Other states have taken similar action, and Congress recently included provisions regarding federal executive employees in its spending bill.

- **Executive Order 2023-04D**, which creates the Mental Health Insurance Assistance Office, citing data that nearly 2.4 million Ohioans are in communities without enough behavioral health professionals and with 19 dying each day due to unintentional overdose and suicide. The order also seeks consumer protection through education and "vigilant" regulation of insurer compliance and collaborative work with employers, insurers, health care providers and patient advocates to develop best practice standards.

- **Executive Order 2023-05D**, which directs the Ohio departments of education (ODE), higher education (ODHE) and job and family services (ODJFS), as well as the Governor's Office of Workforce Transformation, to collaborate with any private or state entities as needed to review current higher education and technical center programs. The review is focused on Ohio workforce needs over the next decade, and involves an analysis of findings by region and industry. They will also produce recommendations for how to increase opportunities toward certificates, credentials and degrees needed for critically indemand jobs.

JUDICIAL

Cleveland will not have to refund \$4.1 million to motorists who paid fines under a now-defunct traffic camera that caught red-light and speeding violators, the Ohio Supreme Court ruled in the waning days of 2022. The 4-3 Court ruled that once drivers paid fines and did not contest tickets under Cleveland's administrative appeal program -- including those who leased rather than owned cited vehicles -- they surrendered the right to reimbursement through a class-action suit.

The power of the judiciary to rule on constitutional matters and other legal disputes without constraint by the executive branch went back before the Ohio Supreme Court Tuesday. Two weeks after its watershed decision rejecting mandatory judicial "deference" to administrative actions in *Twism v. State Board of Registration for Professional Engineers and Surveyors*, the Court heard Highland Tavern's constitutional complaint against Gov. Mike DeWine's defunct "Rule 80" limiting bar service to 10 p.m. in the early days of COVID-19. Highland Tavern operated under five classes of liquor permits without incident until DeWine's July 30, 2020 executive order terminating nightly bar service at 10 p.m. and commercial consumption at 11 p.m. The Ohio Liquor Control Commission (OLCC) followed a day later with identical restrictions in emergency Rule 80. Highland eventually drew three violations from the Ohio State Highway Patrol's Ohio Investigative Unit (OIU), a second administrative agency, and surrendered its liquor licenses in October 2020. It remains closed. Over the objections of the Ohio Attorney General's Office, the Supreme Court accepted Highland's appeal of a 10th District decision denying the tavern a declaratory judgment on the constitutionality of Rule 80. The Summit County Common Pleas Court had ruled similarly.

Lorain County Judge D. Chris Cook has been elected chair of the Ohio Board of Professional Conduct, and Cuyahoga County attorney Patrick M. McLaughlin has been elected as vice chair. Cook and McLaughlin began serving their one-year terms on Jan. 1.

The latest version of the Ohio Supreme Court's annual rules package -- a typically routine affair drawing a rare no-confidence vote by the General Assembly during former Chief Justice Maureen O'Connor's final year in office -- would further revise remote judicial proceedings that prompted the Legislature's veto and allow courts to grant a new trial and legal representation "on a defendant's

motion." O'Connor had anticipated wholesale changes to Ohio's system of justice following the Task Force on Improving Court Operations Using Remote Technology's (iCOURT) final report, which proposed remote jury trials, witnesses, depositions, arraignments, sentencing, juvenile hearings, adjudicatory hearings, service of papers, courtroom oaths and electronic signatures, among other changes in jurisprudence. The General Assembly passed 134-SCR16 (Gavarone) to void the package, however, invoking the right to confront one's accuser, in-person juries and other due process guarantees potentially affected by remote technology. The Supreme Court came back with language affirming its standing policy for virtual hearings in place before COVID-19, which requires local jurisdictions to juggle a range of remote proceedings and other court operations with only home rule to guide them. The Court now has opened a second public comment period on this year's rule package that includes further revisions to virtual participation in court business.

LOBBYISTS

Will Hinman, a former director of the Ohio House speaker's office under Speaker Bob Cupp (R-Lima), announced this week that he has launched Forrest Hinman Capitol Consulting, LLC, a Columbus-based firm that will engage in legislative advocacy, political consulting, business development, procurement guidance, executive and regulatory lobbying and compliance, grassroots coordination, relationship and coalition building, and public affairs and communications strategy.

Ice Miller recently announced the return of former partner Michael Hall to the firm's Public Affairs Group after a stint in the governor's office, where he most recently served as chief of staff to Gov. Mike DeWine. As part of his role in the DeWine administration, Hall led the joint economic development efforts of the governor's staff, working in tandem with JobsOhio and cabinet agencies to help grow the microchip manufacturing industry in Ohio. Hall also served as DeWine's policy director on the 2018 campaign.

MARIJUANA/HEMP

An initiated statute that would legalize the use of marijuana for adults age 21 and older is currently under consideration in the General Assembly. The Ohio Secretary of State's Office transmitted the measure to the Legislature on Jan. 3, and lawmakers have four months to decide whether to pass it. While the Coalition to Regulate Marijuana Like Alcohol (CRMLA) was planning to place the measure on the ballot in 2022, there was disagreement among state leaders and the campaign about whether it was transmitted to the General Assembly properly last year. Eventually, a settlement was reached requiring the petition to be re-transmitted on Jan. 3, 2023. If the General Assembly doesn't pass the measure as-is by the first week of May, CRMLA will begin collecting signatures to place it on the November ballot, campaign spokesperson Tom Haren told *Hannah News* in a phone interview.

The Ohio Board of Pharmacy (OBP) has awarded certificates of operation to two more dispensaries under the Ohio Medical Marijuana Control Program (MMCP). The state's 60th dispensary operating license was issued to Beyond Hello, located at 693 Old State Route 74 in Cincinnati. Ohio's 61st dispensary operating license went to The Citizen by Klutch, located at 5152 Grove Ave. in Lorain.

NATURAL RESOURCES

Gov. Mike DeWine signed 134-HB507 (Koehler), an agriculture-environment omnibus that includes a provision requiring state agencies to lease public land for oil and gas development. DeWine said,

"while the bill initially involved agricultural issues, amendments were added regarding drilling and natural gas issues. As my administration has analyzed this bill, I believe the amendments in HB507 do not fundamentally change the criteria and processes established by the Ohio General Assembly in 2011 that first established the policy of leasing mineral rights under state parks and lands. In addition, I am instructing the director of the Ohio Department of Natural Resources to continue to follow the processes first established by the General Assembly in 2011 in this area. This includes continuing my administration's policy of prohibiting any new surface use access in our state parks."

PEOPLE

Todd Hager of the Ohio Facilities Construction Commission (OFCC) has been chosen to lead the Ohio chapter of the U.S. Green Building Council's (USGBC) 2023 Market Leadership Advisory Board (MLAB). Hager is manager of the state's Green Schools initiative. USGBC Ohio advocates for and works to increase the adoption of "green" building practices throughout the state. The group is led by members of the Market Leadership Advisory Board.

Mark Wagoner, a former state lawmaker and partner at Shumaker, has been appointed as board chair of Paramount Health Care, a division of ProMedica, Shumaker announced. Paramount is a locally owned and operated health insurance company headquartered in Toledo.

POLITICS

Hamilton County Republican Party Chair Alex Triantafilou was elected the new chairman of the Ohio Republican Party over three other rivals by the state party's Central Committee Friday. Triantafilou, an attorney and former judge, won the race on the first ballot, meaning he received at least 34 votes of the 66-member central committee. Triantafilou succeeds Bob Paduchik, who had served in the roll for two years but chose not to seek re-election to the post. Rounding out the winners of party leadership elections are Vice Chair Curt Braden; Treasurer Ron Maag, a former state representative; Assistant Treasurer Gary James; and Secretary Tony Schroeder.

Before the state GOP central committee adjourned, it suspended its rules to adopt a resolution censuring the 21 House Republicans who supported Rep. Jason Stephens (R-Kitts Hill) for speaker as well as Stephens. The resolution states that Stephens was sworn into the speaker's post with House Minority Leader Allison Russo (D-Upper Arlington) holding a Bible for him. The resolution states that the Republicans' action "dishonors the vote of the Ohio House Republican Caucus, dishonors the historic brand of the Republican Party, and misrepresents the voice of Ohio Republican voters who collectively voted for these 22 members in order to defeat the dangerous and perverse Democratic Party Caucus agenda, not to empower it." Notably, the final resolution that was adopted eliminated language of an earlier proposed version that called for the withholding of party endorsements and support for the 22 Republicans.

SECRETARY OF STATE

Secretary of State Frank LaRose took his ceremonial oath of office for his second term at the Statehouse Monday, warning of a growing distrust in elections. LaRose was sworn in by Justice Patrick Fischer in the North Hearing Room of the Senate Building with his wife, Lauren, by his side. Fischer praised LaRose, saying he believes he was destined to hold the office. After taking the oath, LaRose spoke for a few minutes, noting the work his office was able to accomplish in his first term in the midst of a global pandemic, including Ohio's knowing the results of the 2020 presidential

election on election night. He also said his office helped Ohioans start a record number of new businesses in 2020 and 2021, and trained a record number of new poll workers.

LaRose Thursday announced new staff additions to his office for his second term, including former Rep. Shawn Stevens as director of intergovernmental relations for the Secretary of State's Office; Paul Disantis as chief legal counsel and director of public policy; Stephan Shehy as director of legislative affairs; Josh Sabo as deputy chief legal counsel; and Julia Lawrence as assistant chief legal counsel.

STUDIES/POLLS

A recent Buckeye Institute report found Ohio was again 35th among U.S. states in "economic freedom," but Vice President of Policy Rea Hederman Jr. said "incremental progress" had been made on the tax code and occupational licensing, with more opportunities for improvement coming through the budget. Ohio was 35th for the third consecutive year in the report, which was released by the institute's Economic Research Center in partnership with the Fraser Institute in Canada. Economic freedom was measured by government spending, taxation and labor market restrictions. Data from 2020 was used as it is the latest year that was available.

TOBACCO/SMOKING

A group of business organizations responded with disappointment to a veto by Gov. Mike DeWine of HB513 (Cross-Roemer), which would have preempted local regulation of tobacco and vaping products. DeWine said he was motivated by his strong stance against flavored products because of how they encourage youth nicotine and tobacco use. The legislation would have preempted a city of Columbus ban on flavored products that was recently enacted. He said the way to achieve the uniformity lawmakers wanted is to pass a statewide ban on flavored products. "It is unfortunate that the governor vetoed HB513, however, we are pleased that the governor recognizes the necessity for uniformity of regulation as it relates to the sale of products by businesses in the state of Ohio. As the governor has stated publicly, unchecked restrictions on marketplace uniformity will harm Ohio. Consumers will lose access to products and services they need and employers will leave because of a confusing, inefficient patchwork of 'micro-markets.' We look forward to working with the governor and members of the Ohio House of Representatives and Ohio Senate to pursue commonsense efforts to promote marketplace uniformity," said a statement from the NFIB-Ohio, Ohio Council of Retail Merchants, Ohio Chamber of Commerce and Ohio Manufacturers' Association.

TREASURER OF STATE

Ohio Treasurer Robert Sprague Tuesday reminded farmers, agribusinesses and agricultural cooperatives who are planning for the 2023 growing season that the Ag-LINK program is available year-round. Through Ag-LINK, farmers, agribusinesses, and co-ops can receive an interest rate reduction on new or existing operating loans. For more than 30 years, the program has helped Ohio's agriculture community to finance the upfront costs for feed, seed, fertilizer, fuel, equipment, and other expenses.

WORKFORCE

Lt. Gov. Jon Husted announced Tuesday, Jan. 3 that 13 workforce partnerships will be receiving a total of \$2.45 million through the third round of the Industry Sector Partnership (ISP) grant program,

supporting local collaborations that bring more Ohioans into the workforce while meeting the needs of job creators. The selected partnerships focus on multiple in-demand industry sectors including information technology, manufacturing, health care, transportation and aerospace. "These partnerships connect educators and businesses and through that collaboration, a local job training network is created to help students prepare for the most in-demand careers available in their communities," Husted said.

Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) Director Matt Damschroder announced Thursday that ApprenticeshipOhio sponsors and employers have until Friday, March 31, 2023, to apply for grants to help cover training and tool costs incurred since July 1, 2020. The deadline was extended from Dec. 31, 2022, to allow more program sponsors and Ohio employers with registered apprentices in their workforces to apply. ODJFS oversees ApprenticeshipOhio, which registers programs that meet national criteria for quality and safety. Each ApprenticeshipOhio program is run by a sponsor: usually an employer, a group of employers or a labor/management committee. Apprentices learn skills needed for a job in the sponsor's industry through at least 2,000 hours of structured on-the-job training and 144 hours of classroom training, typically at a local college or university. Ohio has 319 occupations that offer apprenticeships in fields as diverse as aerospace, construction, energy, health care, manufacturing, computer programming, and more. For more information, visit <http://Apprentice.Ohio.gov>.