



GOVERNMENTAL POLICY GROUP, INC. RH RESOURCES

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Week in Review

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ADDICTION/SUBSTANCE ABUSE

The OneOhio Recovery Foundation is currently accepting applications from individuals interested in joining its expert panel, a group of independent advisers who will help guide the distribution of millions of dollars to support addiction relief, recovery and prevention efforts across the state. Ohioans interested in applying should visit www.OneOhioFoundation.com/Expert-Panel-Application and submit a completed application using the online form or by emailing the PDF application to Apply@oneohiofoundation.com. All applications and applicant resumes must be received no later than Friday, Feb. 17.

BUDGET, F.Y. 24-25

With the General Assembly expected to begin debate on the FY24-25 transportation budget shortly, Greater Ohio Policy Center (GOPC) released its recommendations focusing on two programs. First, GOPC said lawmakers should invest at least \$75 million per year in public transportation, or \$150 million over the biennium. The group noted that the current transportation budget relies on a combination of General Revenue Funds (GRF) and federal highway "flex funding" to get a net allocation of \$70 million for public transit agencies. However, a requirement that local agencies provide matching funds to draw down federal funds means the funding is inaccessible to small, rural systems, GOPC said, so it is recommending that instead of using "flex funding" lawmakers should favor 100 percent GRF spending. The group is also asking lawmakers to match Ohio's \$5 million in federal funding for the "Safe Routes to Schools" Program with \$5 million from the GRF for a total of \$10 million per year. GOPC said the program is popular and oversubscribed and protects the lives of children.

An alliance of organizations focused on children's wellbeing and the think tank Policy Matters Ohio (PMO) Thursday separately released their priorities for the upcoming FY24-25 biennial budget deliberations ahead of Gov. Mike DeWine's delivering his executive proposal to lawmakers on Tuesday, Jan. 31. The Ohio Children's Budget Coalition released a report, "Creating a Vision of Child Well-Being for Ohio," which describes current policy, opportunities for improvement and specific recommendations in 15 areas spanning physical and behavioral health, nutrition, education, child care, foster care, youth incarceration and economic security. Among the coalition's recommendations is doubling funding for key lead poisoning prevention programs and moving enforcement authority for the federal Renovation, Repair and Painting (RPP) rule for pre-1978 housing to the state level and giving it to the Ohio Department of Health. Another recommendation is providing additional Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) money for rapid rehousing and wrap-around services for families and pregnant women, as well as additional money for the Healthy Beginnings at Home pilot project, which provides housing supports and other assistance to pregnant women and new mothers in an effort to improve infant mortality rates and improve birth outcomes. Expansion of this program was already identified as a priority by DeWine as part of his "Bold Beginning" initiative. Policy Matters structures its recommendations around measuring how Ohio compares to other states in four domains: health and wellness; learning and growth; connection and community; and dignity and opportunity. The think tank frames its report around assessing a claim made by DeWine in his 2022 "State of the State" speech that "there is simply no better place to raise a family than Ohio."

Groundwork Ohio, too, released its new "Early Childhood Dashboard," which takes an in-depth, data-driven look at the health and education of young children in Ohio ahead of the release of the proposed FY24-25 budget. The dashboard, which was created in partnership with the Health Policy Institute of Ohio (HPIO), incorporates more than 60 metrics across six different domains. It

compares Ohio data to national averages on a range of issues from infant and maternal health and health care access to kindergarten readiness, chronic absenteeism, exposure to traumatic events in early childhood, economic stability, and more. The dashboard "illuminates areas in need of increased investment, focused attention, and urgent action in Ohio's upcoming biennial budget and beyond; and will help inform policymakers and the public about the realities facing Ohio families," Groundwork Ohio said.

EDUCATION

Nearly three years after the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, school closures and lost instructional time continue to take a toll on students and schools. The latest National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) -- also called the Nation's Report Card -- found significant drop-offs in reading and math proficiency for fourth and eighth grade students both in Ohio and across the country. The pandemic also exacerbated existing gaps in the education system with students from low income families and Black and Hispanic students faring far worse than higher income, White students. The Columbus Metropolitan Club's (CMC) Wednesday forum sought to identify some ways to move forward. Panelist Stephane Lavertu suggested schools and policy makers might need to moderate their expectations of how much learning loss can be quickly recovered.

ELECTIONS

Democrat Tamie Wilson of Delaware announced Wednesday that she will seek the Democratic nomination to run for the 4th Congressional District in 2024, potentially setting up a rematch with U.S. Rep. Jim Jordan (R-Urbana). Jordan defeated Wilson in November with 69 percent of the vote.

EMPLOYMENT/UNEMPLOYMENT

According to the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS), Ohio's unemployment was 4.2 percent in December, unchanged from November's rate, as the state added 1,900 jobs over the month. ODFJS said the number of workers unemployed in Ohio in December was 244,000, up from 243,000 in November. The number of unemployed has decreased by 12,000 in the past 12 months from 256,000. The U.S. unemployment rate for December 2022 was 3.5 percent, down from 3.6 percent in November 2022, and down from 3.9 percent in December 2021.

ENERGY/UTILITIES

Natural gas output from Ohio's Utica and Marcellus shale regions rose just over 1 percent in the third quarter of 2022 -- the Ohio Department of Natural Resources' (ODNR) latest reporting period -- while oil yields fell by roughly the same amount. Horizontal wells in eastern and southern Ohio produced 543 billion cubic feet (cf) of natural gas between July-September of last year compared to a revised department figure of 536 billion cf in the second quarter. Year-over-year, Q3 2022 still trailed 674 billion cf of natural gas from third-quarter 2021 and Ohio's all-time high of 685 billion cf in 2019.

The Public Utilities Commission of Ohio (PUCO) unanimously approved a \$68.2 million rate hike for Columbia Gas of Ohio Thursday over the objection of Ohio Partners for Affordable Energy (OPAE), Environmental Law and Policy Center (ELPC) and Citizens Utility Board (CUB), which said higher residential fixed charges and eliminated energy efficiency programs for all but low-income groups were not in consumers' interests. The vote made official a three-month-old settlement

between a wide range of parties including PUCO staff, Office of Ohio Consumers' Counsel (OCC), Ohio Manufacturers' Association (OMA) Energy Group, Industrial Energy Users (IEU) Ohio, Interstate Gas Supply (IGS), Northeast Ohio Public Energy Council (NOPEC), Ohio Schools Council (OSC), Retail Energy Supply Association (RESA), The Kroger Co., and Columbia Gas, which serves 1.45 million customers in 60 Ohio counties.

The Public Utilities Commission of Ohio (PUCO) Nominating Council forwarded four names to the governor Thursday to replace outgoing Commissioner M. Beth Trombold, including PUCO veteran and current Transportation Department Director John Williams of Columbus, a political independent who received 10 votes; Regulatory Affairs Director Christopher Healey of Enervee Corp. in Lewis Center, a former assistant consumers' counsel at the Office of Ohio Consumers' Counsel (OCC) and Democrat who received nine votes; former state representative and attorney general candidate Jeffrey Crossman of Parma, a Democrat who received eight votes; and state Rep. Mike Skindell (D-Lakewood), a longtime legislator who received five votes.

ENVIRONMENT

The Greater Ohio Policy Center (GOPC) Wednesday released an updated white paper which examined all three funding rounds of the Brownfield Remediation Fund. GOPC previously released a paper on the first round of the program and called for allocating another \$500 million in the next budget. The fund invested a total of \$341 million in environmental cleanup, with projects underway to "assess, cleanup and revitalize brownfields" in 83 Ohio counties, according to GOPC. That supports 188 clean-up projects and 125 assessments, and nearly 98 percent of the Ohio population lives in the counties which received grant awards.

ETHICS

A lobbying income reporting provision of Rep. Derek Merrin's (R-Maumee) proposed ethics reform bill could be problematic, according to Ohio Lobbying Association (OLA) President Josh Sanders. Part of the ethics reform bill would require all lobbying income to be reported and sourced directly to clients. "While we have not yet seen any details of the legislation, it is greatly concerning to hear part of the proposed legislation is to force private companies to reveal the terms of private contracts, which does little to improve ethics laws governing policymakers," Sanders said in a statement.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

In a raucous floor session Tuesday, the Ohio House elected the rest of the chamber's Republican leadership slate and adopted the rules for the chamber over the loud objections of Rep. Derek Merrin (R-Maumee) and his allied members, after House Speaker Jason Stephens (R-Kitts Hill) refused to allow debate on the resolutions. The House also adopted HCR3 (Oelslager), which sets a joint House and Senate session for the "State of the State" address for noon Tuesday, Jan. 31.

Stephens again called for a vote rather than allow amendments on the House rules package, HR11 (Oelslager), which passed 63-35. At least one concern of Merrin and his allies was addressed, stating that the "speaker shall not eliminate parking privileges or the office of a member without the member's consent and may not remove a member's staff without the member's acquiescence." Some Republicans had expressed concerns that they could be punished by losing staff or parking spots for falling out of line with the speaker. Also under those rules, the House minority leader will have more say over her own members than in previous sessions.

Stephens announced committee chairs on Monday, choosing Rep. Jay Edwards (R-Nelsonville) to lead the House Finance Committee. Rep. Jeff LaRe (R-Canal Winchester) will be vice chair. Of note, a change to House rules this session means subcommittee members do not have to be members of the full House Finance Committee. Chairing the seven House Finance subcommittees are the following:

- House Finance Subcommittee on Agriculture, Development and Natural Resources, chaired by Rep. Don Jones (R-Freeport).
- House Finance Subcommittee on Health and Human Services, chaired by Rep. Sara Carruthers (R-Hamilton).
- House Finance Subcommittee on Higher Education, chaired by Rep. Gayle Manning (R-North Ridgeville). - House Finance Subcommittee on Infrastructure and American Rescue Plan, chaired by Rep. Jamie Callender (R-Concord).
- House Finance Subcommittee on Primary and Secondary Education, chaired by Rep. Tracy Richardson (R-Marysville).
- House Finance Subcommittee on Public Safety, chaired by Rep. Kevin Miller (R-Newark).
- House Finance Subcommittee on Transportation, chaired by Rep. Tom Patton (R-Strongsville).

House Minority Leader Allison Russo (D-Upper Arlington) released the committee assignments for her members on Thursday, with a number of freshmen getting spots as ranking members on various committees. Rep. Bride Sweeney (D-Cleveland) will again serve as the ranking member for the House Finance Committee. Ranking minority members on the subcommittees include the following:

- House Finance Subcommittee on Agriculture, Development and Natural Resources – Rep. Dan Troy (D-Willowick).
- House Finance Subcommittee on Health and Human Services – Rep. Beth Liston (D-Dublin).
- House Finance Subcommittee on Higher Education – Rep. Dontavious Jarrells (D-Columbus).
- House Finance Subcommittee on Infrastructure and American Rescue Plan – Skindell.
- House Finance Subcommittee on Primary and Secondary Education – Rep. Dani Isaacsohn (D-Cincinnati).
- House Finance Subcommittee on Public Safety – Rep. Adam Miller (D-Columbus).
- House Finance Subcommittee on Transportation – Rep. Mike Skindell (D-Lakewood).

In its first meeting of the new General Assembly and with several new faces, the Controlling Board continued to ask questions of state agencies on unbid contracts or to urge better communication with lawmakers. Among the items held for questioning but later approved was a request from the Ohio Department of Medicaid (ODM) to continue contracting with Gainwell Technologies for the use of its software for the Medicaid Information Technology System at least through the end of FY23. Sen. Jerry Cirino (R-Kirtland) asked the agency why the contract wasn't being competitively bid. Steven

Alexander, legislative liaison for ODM, explained that ODM has been competitively bidding various aspects of its new enterprise system, and have been bidding out different modules of that new system piecemeal. He said as a result of doing that process incrementally, ODM will have to continue to use the Gainwell system for a little longer.

GOVERNOR

Gov. Mike DeWine and Lt. Gov. Jon Husted Thursday announced a plan to remove "duplicative, outdated and unnecessary regulations" from the Ohio Administrative Code (OAC), reducing its size by one-third. Husted said the proposal will eliminate more than five million words covering over 20,000 pages in the OAC, and gave examples of sections to be removed. They include Ohio Lottery Commission regulations on games that are no longer played; Ohio Department of Higher Education copies of university policies that are already published on each institution's website; and word-for-word replication of national building and fire code standards that can be rewritten to only identify differences between Ohio and other states. The review process was augmented by using an artificial intelligence (AI) tool. The DeWine administration is also adding a re-introduction of "Innovate the Code" provisions from the 134th General Assembly to the forthcoming budget. That language was previously offered in 134-SB279 (Wilson) and 134-HB524 (T. Hall).

HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Gov. Mike DeWine and Ohio Department of Medicaid (ODM) Director Maureen Corcoran launched Comprehensive Maternal Care (CMC) on Monday. CMC is a community-based, statewide program aimed at improving the health and well-being of mothers, infants and families covered by Medicaid. The program creates a framework for providers and community partners to work together to develop person-centered, customized interventions to support women and families who've historically lacked ready access to high-quality responsive care before and after pregnancy. To participate, obstetrical practices are required to measure and engage with patients and families through advisory councils or other means to hear firsthand accounts of how access to care, cultural competence and communication methods affect patient outcomes. Practices must use patient input to improve the patient experience and reduce disparities. They also must consider and link patients to resources that address broader factors of health -- such as housing, food instability and transportation.

INSURANCE

The Ohio Department of Insurance (ODI) announced that its director, Judith French, was named chair of the National Association of Insurance Commissioners (NAIC) Life Insurance and Annuities Committee, among other ODI representation on NAIC panels. French is also a member of the Innovation, Cybersecurity and Technology Committee. The Life Insurance and Annuities Committee focuses on issues around the underwriting, pricing, and suitability aspects of life insurance and annuity products while the Innovation, Cybersecurity, and Technology Committee addresses cybersecurity, innovation, data security, and privacy protections in insurance.

INTEL

Intel said in a release Monday that it had been approximately one year since the company announced it would invest an initial \$20 billion to build two semiconductor chip factories in New Albany. As part of that anniversary, Intel said the site will be named "Ohio One." "The name is a nod to the state's long and storied history in manufacturing and its track record of producing firsts," Intel

explained. The company also released a one-year anniversary video. In it, Vice President and Ohio General Manager Jim Evers discusses that Intel picked Ohio for its government cooperation and sources of talent. He added he believes Intel has lived up to its commitment to be a "great neighbor" so far.

JUDICIAL

A dozen current and former Ohio Supreme Court justices and members of the General Assembly joined the attorney general and lieutenant governor Wednesday to honor Chief Justice Sharon Kennedy at her swearing-in as the state's top jurist. Speakers praised her optimism and determination, and Kennedy promised not only to uphold the rule of law and address court backlogs but also to lift up the needy. Officials present for the afternoon ceremony included Attorney General Dave Yost, Lt. Gov. Jon Husted, House Speaker Jason Stephens (R-Kitts Hill) and former House Speaker/Supreme Court Justice Bob Cupp. Justices Melody Stewart, Michael Donnelly and Joe Deters were in attendance, while Justices Patrick Fischer, R. Patrick DeWine and Jennifer Brunner submitted prepared remarks due to scheduling conflicts. Past members of the Court also included Hon. Paul Pfeifer, Hon. Mary DeGenaro and Hon. Evelyn Lundberg Stratton, who delivered the oath. Among legislators on hand were Reps. Bill Seitz (R-Cincinnati), Sara Carruthers (R-Hamilton), Thomas Hall (R-Middletown), Monica Robb Blasdel (R-Columbiana) and the outgoing Brian Baldrige (R-Winchester). Former veteran legislator Dave Johnson, a member of the Ohio Republican Party (ORP) State Central Committee and the Ohio Bureau of Workers' Compensation (BWC) Board of Directors, served as master of ceremonies.

PEOPLE

Mike Rodgers will join the Ohio State University (OSU) Office of Government Affairs as the next associate vice president for state relations, effective Monday, Jan. 30, 2023. Rodgers will represent the university before the Ohio General Assembly, executive branch, and other government entities. Rodgers has nearly 20 years of experience working in state government, spending the past four as a member of Attorney General Dave Yost's executive staff, serving as director of policy and public affairs. Prior to that, Rodgers was the chief legal counsel at Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities, a deputy legal counsel at the Ohio Department of Natural Resources and the chief legal counsel for the Ohio Department of Agriculture. Rodgers replaces Brian Perera, who was in the role for eight years.

Natural Allies for a Clean Energy Future, a 501(c)(4) organization that supports the use of natural gas, announced that former U.S. Rep. Tim Ryan (D-OH) is joining its leadership council alongside former U.S. Sen. Mary Landrieu (D-LA). Ryan left Congress last year after he lost a bid for the U.S. Senate against J.D. Vance. He served 10 terms in the U.S. House.

The investment expert appointed to the State Teachers Retirement System (STRS) Board of Trustees by Treasurer Robert Sprague has resigned, and a new appointment is in the works. Scott Roulston, the appointee of the treasurer's office, resigned near year's end, citing "other commitments" in a letter to STRS leadership.

The Ohio Township Association (OTA) has hired Kyle Brooks as director of governmental affairs, the organization announced Friday. Brooks previously worked for former U.S. Rep. Bob Gibbs (R-Lakeville), where he served in various positions since 2016. With a focus on military and veteran services, he represented Gibbs in five of the 10 counties in the district and worked extensively on

policy briefings, collaborated on strategic goals, and led roundtable discussions on current events and issues with constituents.

The Strategy Group Company announced that Billy Grant will join the company as political director. Described by the company as a "well-connected" GOP operative, Grant will be leading The Strategy Group's sales efforts in the 2024 cycle and beyond. According to the release, Grant has years of experience, including having served in 2022 as vice president of strategy at Arsenal Media Group, where he led Kari Lake's successful primary campaign.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Fire departments across the state will receive \$3.5 million in Multi-Agency Radio Communications (MARCS) grants, according to the Ohio Department of Commerce's (DOC) Division of State Fire Marshal. The grants go to 325 fire departments in 76 counties, DOC said.

SECRETARY OF STATE

Secretary of State Frank LaRose announced that 2022 saw the second highest number of business filings since his office began tracking the data. According to the secretary of state's office, there were 179,636 new business filings in 2022, down 18,374 filings from the all-time record-setting year in 2021. December 2022 saw 13,012 new business filings, 496 more filings than December 2021.

STATE GOVERNMENT

Ohio Office of Budget and Management (OBM) Director Kimberly Murnieks and Ohio Department of Administrative Services (DAS) Director Kathleen Madden were both reelected to their positions as chair and vice chair respectively of the Ohio Facilities Construction Commission (OFCC) Thursday. OFCC oversees school facility programs and capital projects for state agencies and higher education institutions. Both Murnieks and Madden were reelected by a unanimous vote. Murnieks told *Hannah News* the agency is still experiencing some supply chain issues from the pandemic but has been successful with moving projects forward and continues to do "tremendous work" for students and schools across Ohio.

TAXATION

Patricia Harris will be the next commissioner of the Ohio Department of Taxation (ODT), Gov. Mike DeWine announced Tuesday. Harris currently serves as chief operating officer of the Ohio Bureau of Workers' Compensation (BWC). If the nomination is confirmed by the Senate, Harris will replace Jeff McClain, who retired as ODT commissioner in 2022.

TRANSPORTATION/INFRASTRUCTURE

The Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) is researching alternative ways to pay for road and bridge maintenance in the state and has launched a website seeking public input on the issue. According to the website, www.OhioRoadFunding.com, the state needs to look at how it currently pays for bridges and highways because the current method which draws mostly from proceeds of the state's gas tax is not sustainable "More Ohioans are driving high-mileage gas vehicles or hybrid or electric vehicles, which has welcomed environmental benefits but decreases the amount of gas being purchase," ODOT states on the website, adding that it is "evaluating a variety of funding options to

replace the fuel tax and stabilize transportation revenues in Ohio well into the future." ODOT said the information it collects through its research effort will be put together in a report that will be sent to the General Assembly in late spring of this year. It will ultimately be up to lawmakers to create any new funding option.

WORKERS' COMPENSATION

A total of \$15 million in grants is being offered by the state Workforce Safety Innovation Center (WSIC), the Ohio Bureau of Workers' Compensation (BWC) announced Thursday. The grants can be used for the research and development of personal protective equipment (PPE) and personal protective technology (PPT) to enhance workplace safety, BWC said. Utilizing data from BWC claims, workforce safety innovation grants focus on new ideas that help reduce the frequency and severity of on-the-job injuries. The grant is administered with a goal of accelerating the process for innovations from proof-of-concept to the marketplace.

LEGISLATIVE ACTIVITY

HOUSE

ADOPTED BY HOUSE

HCR3 JOINT CONVENTION - STATE OF STATE ADDRESS (Rep. Jason Stephens, Rep. Allison Russo) Authorizing a joint convention of the Ohio General Assembly for the purpose of receiving a message from the Governor and calling for a committee to wait upon the Governor in anticipation of his State of the State Address.
Vote 98-0

HR10 MAJORITY LEADERSHIP TEAM (Rep. Scott Oelslager) Relative to the election of Rep. Bill Seitz as majority floor leader; Rep. Jon Cross as assistant majority floor leader; Rep. Jim Hoops as majority whip; and Rep. Sharon Ray as assistant majority whip for the 135th General Assembly of Ohio.
Vote 64-34

HR11 HOUSE RULES (Rep. Scott Oelslager) To adopt Rules of the House of Representatives for the 135th General Assembly.
Vote 64-35

SENATE

ADOPTED BY SENATE

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