

Week in Review
Friday, Feb. 17, 2017

ADDICTION/SUBSTANCE ABUSE

Attorney General Mike DeWine and Senate President Larry Obhof (R-Medina) on Friday released 15 recommendations from the Ohio Joint Study Committee on Drug Use Prevention Education designed to reach children with consistent, age-appropriate, evidence-based drug messaging from the earliest years of learning. The stakes, they said, are the lives of children and future adults in every socio-economic group in the state.

AGRICULTURE

Sen. Cliff Hite (R-Findlay) continued the push Tuesday for changes to the current agriculture use valuation (CAUV) formula in the wake of spiking farmland prices, reviving his proposal from last session to address concerns with the capitalization rate and lack of incentives for conservation practices. Hite's SB36 is the same as his 131-SB246, which got four hearings in the previous General Assembly and was supported by the Ohio Farm Bureau Federation (OFBF) and Ohio Farmers Union.

BALLOT ISSUES

Victim's rights groups came together Wednesday to officially launch their campaign for a proposed constitutional amendment to improve the rights of crime victims in Ohio, announcing an 88-county effort to get the issue before voters in November. The proposal would expand the crime victims' bill of rights in the Ohio Constitution, including the right of notification for all criminal proceedings and a guarantee to be heard at every step in a criminal proceeding.

FY18-19 BUDGET

The Office of Budget and Management (OBM) announced Monday the release of the simulations for its proposed redistribution of a portion of the Local Government Fund (LGF) based on capacity by counties, cities, tax-levying and non-income tax-levying villages and townships. Those tables can be found on OBM's FY18-19 budget website at <http://www.obm.ohio.gov/Budget/operating/fy18-19.aspx>.

Democrats serving on the House Finance Committee issued an "economic wake up call" Tuesday to voters and their Republican colleagues, saying recent economic news and trends should prompt state leaders to try different approaches in this new budget cycle. The focus on income tax cuts from Republicans in this and past administrations, and the increased sales and property taxes of the past two budgets under Gov. John Kasich are not getting the intended results, the lawmakers charged.

The Ohio Consumers' Counsel (OCC) is back before the General Assembly with a proposal rejected during the FY16-17 budget process: to allow OCC to answer questions that come into their office instead of referring consumers to the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio (PUCO) call center, despite the administration's proposed 2 percent budget cut.

CORRECTIONS

Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction (DRC) Director Gary Mohr lobbied the House Finance Committee Tuesday for a "paradigm shift" in correctional thinking to reallocate major dollars to community settings for low-level, non-violent offenders and to radically increase GED attainment -- what he called the single biggest predictor for successful reentry that avoids recidivism.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE

The state senators who represent the home county of Sierah Joughin announced their intent to introduce "Sierah's Law," a prospective violent offender registry in Ohio. Sen. Randy Gardner (R-Bowling Green) and Sen. Cliff Hite (R-Findlay) are sponsoring the bill named in honor of Joughin, the University of Toledo student and graduate of Evergreen High School in Fulton County who was murdered last July. The senators said the registry would likely be coordinated with Ohio's existing sex offender registry and implemented at the county level under the auspices of the attorney general's office.

DEATH PENALTY

Gov. John Kasich issued a revised schedule for eight upcoming executions Friday in response to a temporary federal stay of the death penalty in Ohio. The U.S. 6th Circuit Court of Appeals is currently reviewing a challenge by Death Row inmates to Ohio's

execution protocol. The court did not rule prior to what had been the next scheduled execution, that of Ronald Phillips, on Wednesday, Feb. 15.

The Ohio Parole Board has voted unanimously to recommend that the governor deny Death Row inmate Gary Otte clemency.

EDUCATION

State Board of Education members heard from Superintendent Paolo DeMaria and staff Monday on how Ohio plans to implement the new federal law, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). Much of the discussion and board members' questions focused on testing. DeMaria, senior adviser Colleen Grady and lead accountability official Chris Woolard presented an overview of Ohio's draft plan.

Charter schools would have more responsibility to keep track of students' addresses of residence under legislation proposed by Rep. Stephen Hambley (R-Brunswick), who says it's needed to ensure funding for charter students flows from the correct source.

The Ohio Department of Education (ODE) plans to host three conferences for bidders interested in applying for federal grant funding through the McKinney-Vento Homeless Children and Youth Program. Additional information about signing up for the bidders conferences and applying for funding is available at <http://tinyurl.com/zqshrwn>.

Lawmakers are hoping to create a school facilities program to help districts with little prospect of getting traditional facilities assistance the option of smaller amounts to address technology and security needs. Sens. Randy Gardner (R-Bowling Green) and Lou Terhar (R-Cincinnati) testified Wednesday on their SB8 in the Senate Education Committee. Rep. Steve Arndt (R-Port Clinton) testified Tuesday on his HB37.

The Broadcast Educational Media Commission (BEMC) has asked all public TV stations in the state to be ready to abandon the content distribution system and move completely to the new system by March 31. BEMC is in the midst of completing its long-awaited centralized master control project, which will allow central casting of all public TV channels.

Superintendent Paolo DeMaria faced the Joint Education Oversight Committee on Thursday to present the state's draft plan to implement the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). The committee also announced plans for two hearings in March for others to offer feedback to the committee on the ESSA plan: 2:30 p.m.-4 p.m. Thursday, March 2; and 1:30 p.m.-3:30 p.m. Thursday, March 9.

Students who want to participate in the third year of College Credit Plus can begin the notification process for the 2017-18 school year now, the departments of education and higher education announced this week. Public high school students Wednesday could begin to notify their principal of their interest to participate, and must declare their intent to participate by April 1.

ELECTIONS

Three legislators, possible candidates for secretary of state (SOS) in 2018, have all introduced elections-related bills recently. Rep. Kathleen Clyde (D-Kent) introduced HB14, which would enact Automatic Voter Registration in Ohio. Meanwhile, Sen. Frank LaRose (R-Copley) re-introduced legislation to ensure greater transparency in local elections by allowing campaign finance reports to be filed electronically with county boards of elections. Finally, Rep. Dorothy Pelanda (R-Marysville) introduced HB41 which would modify the law concerning challenges to voter registrations, the appointment of observers, and the procedures for processing absent voter's ballots and for casting absent voter's ballots in person.

ELECTIONS 2018

The National Republican Congressional Committee (NRCC) announced 36 initial targets for the 2018 election cycle, including the seat now held by U.S. Rep. Tim Ryan (D-Niles), who won re-election with two-thirds of the vote. NRCC is currently chaired by U.S. Rep. Steve Sitvers (R-Columbus).

Ohio Treasurer and 2018 U.S. Senate hopeful Josh Mandel announced the list of those who will serve as the 88 county chairs for his Senate race. Mandel's campaign said the team consists of conservative activists, elected officials and business leaders.

Endorsements made over the week include the following:

ENVIRONMENT

Recently adopted Ohio Environmental Protection Agency (Ohio EPA) rules require public water systems to develop contingency plans in the event that methods of water delivery or treatment are compromised. Ohio EPA Deputy Director for Communications Heidi Griesmer said the agency had been working on the rules since the end of 2015, noting public water systems would have to work with local emergency management agencies (EMAs) and county boards of health in the event of a water emergency.

FEDERAL

U.S. Sen. Rob Portman (R-OH) said in a statement Wednesday that he will support President Donald Trump's nomination of Judge Neil Gorsuch to serve on the U.S. Supreme Court.

Ohio Democrats are standing against the potential roll-back of an Obama-era labor policy aimed at protecting Americans from unsound investment advice. U.S. Sen. Sherrod Brown (D-OH), U.S. Rep. Marcy Kaptur (D-OH) and U.S. Rep. Tim Ryan (D-OH) joined Micah Hauptman, financial services counsel at Consumer Federation of America, and Barbara Sykes, state director of AARP Ohio, on a conference call Thursday to speak out against delaying or cancelling the policy that is currently set to be implemented on April 10.

FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS

Companion bills aiming to modernize Ohio's banking laws received their first hearings on Tuesday, with lawmakers noting much of the current "antiquated" code has not received an update since the 1980s. HB35 (Hughes) and SB29 (Coley-Oelslager) seek to provide a more secure environment for Ohio consumers, bill sponsors told committees in each chamber.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY/STATEHOUSE

Hannah News published the list of which state agencies, boards, commissions and other entities are assigned to which House Finance subcommittee -- or standing committee in the case of the workers' compensation and Industrial Commission budgets -- for deliberations on the FY18-19 proposed operating budget, HB49 (R. Smith).

Freshman legislator Rep. Candice Keller (R-Middletown) told *Hannah News* that she felt qualified to run not only because she had been a long-time active member of the Republican Party but also because, as the executive director of a pro-life organization in Butler County, she had experience working for one of the top issues in the district. She ran, however, without the local party's endorsement.

Freshman Rep. Brigid Kelly (D-Cincinnati) told *Hannah News* that she had already followed in her family's municipal government footsteps as a Norwood City councilwoman, and now she's succeeded her mentor, the term-limited Rep. Denise Driehaus, in representing the 31st House District.

Speaker of the Ohio House Clifford Rosenberger (R-Clarksville) announced the appointment of Rep. Tim Ginter (R-Salem) Monday as chair of the Advisory Board of the Governor's Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives (GOFBCI).

Wednesday's House session saw passage of HB4 (Cupp-Rogers), which addresses cocaine trafficking penalties in response to an Ohio Supreme Court case; HB32 (Seitz), which specifies that casino employees may gamble at casinos not affiliated with their employer; HB11 (Scherer), tax conformity legislation; and HR15 (Rosenberger-Strahorn), which addresses travel allowances for House members.

Wednesday's Senate session included passage of SB25 (Hottinger), to create a Perry County Municipal Court; and SCR4 (Peterson), which allows General Assembly leadership to pick groups of lawmakers to prepare arguments for and against proposed constitutional amendments.

In other action, the House Transportation and Public Safety Committee reported out highway designation bills HB16 (Cera) and HB22 (Hambley).

GOVERNOR

Gov. John Kasich asked the General Assembly Monday to authorize moving the "State of the State" address to Sandusky on Tuesday, April 4, continuing his tradition of taking the annual speech out of Columbus.

The governor made the following appointments during the week:

- Terry L. Casey of Columbus (Franklin County) reappointed to the State Personnel Board of Review for a term beginning Feb. 10, 2017 and ending Feb. 7, 2023.
- Jeffrey T. Caswell of New Albany (Franklin County) to the Board of Tax Appeals for a term beginning Feb. 10, 2017 and ending Feb. 8, 2023.
- Laura E. Kohler of New Albany (Franklin County) to the State Board of Education for a term beginning Feb. 10, 2017 and ending Dec. 31, 2020.
- William C. Taft of Wellsville (Columbiana County) to the Financial Planning and Supervision Commission of the village of Wellsville for a term beginning Feb. 16, 2017 and continuing at the pleasure of the governor.
- June Taylor of Beachwood (Cuyahoga County) has been designated to serve as chair of the Ohio Casino Control Commission. Commissioner Taylor was appointed to the commission in 2011 and reappointed in 2015. She will succeed Commissioner Jo Ann

Davidson, who has reached her six-year term limit as chair. Davidson will continue to serve on the commission.

HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

The Ohio Department of Health (ODH) said the number of flu-associated hospitalizations in Ohio has continued to increase, and there have been three pediatric deaths attributable to the flu in recent weeks.

Sen. Michael Skindell (D- Lakewood) Tuesday joined with representatives of the National Nurses Organizing Committee-Ohio/National Nurses United (NNOC/NNU) to announce the reintroduction of the Ohio Patient Protection Act at a news conference at the Statehouse. According to Skindell, the bill, SB55, would increase patient safety by setting limits on the number of patients a registered nurse (RN) may care for at one time. The nurse-to-patient ratio requirements would be based on the seriousness of the condition being treated or the medical procedure that each respective patient is undergoing.

The Ohio Association of Health Plans (OAHP) Tuesday released a report showing the benefits that private sector managed care plans have brought to the Medicaid program in recent years. The report, titled, "The Impact of Private Industry on Public Health Care: How Managed Care is Reshaping Medicaid in Ohio," looks at the best practices, quality improvements, and cost-savings that have been realized by moving away from the traditional Medicaid fee-for-service approach and into a system that is focused on person-centered, coordinated care, OAHP said.

Former Rep. Barbara Sears, now director of the Ohio Department of Medicaid, on Thursday walked the members of the Joint Medicaid Oversight Committee (JMOC) through the findings of the department's recently released report on the Medicaid Expansion population -- also referred to as "Group 8 beneficiaries." These are adults with income at or below 138 percent of poverty. She also previewed her upcoming testimony on the proposed FY18-19 Medicaid budget.

HIGHER EDUCATION

The Wittenberg University Board of Directors chose Michael Frandsen, current vice president for finance and administration at Oberlin College, as Wittenberg's new president. The decision came after a six-month search.

Ohio State University (OSU) has won a challenge among Big Ten Conference universities to divert the most waste away from landfills at home football games. OSU topped the GameDay Recycling Challenge among Big Ten schools with an "average diversion rate," which is the percentage of trash that is diverted away from landfills and instead recycled, repurposed or composted, of 95.4 percent.

The Arbor Day Foundation recently recognized Kent State as a "Tree Campus USA" for the ninth-straight year. To earn the distinction, the campus needed a tree-advisory committee, a tree-care plan, annual expenditures for campus trees, service-learning projects aimed at engaging the student body and observation of Arbor Day on campus.

Wright State recently hosted visits from the four candidates for university president. The candidates -- Cheryl Schrader, chancellor of Missouri University of Science and Technology; Dennis Shields, chancellor of the University of Wisconsin-Platteville; and Deborah Ford, chancellor of Missouri University of Science and Technology -- each touched on similar issues that they said Wright State is facing.

INSURANCE

The Ohio Department of Insurance (ODI) will sponsor monthly "Welcome to Medicare" online webinars for Ohioans newly eligible for Medicare in 2017, announced Lt. Gov. Mary Taylor, director of ODI.

The House Insurance Committee heard no legislation scheduled Wednesday but instead took testimony on the state of the industry from the Ohio Department of Insurance (ODI), Ohio Association of Health Plans (OAHP), Ohio Insurance Institute (OII) and Association of Ohio Life Insurance Companies (AOLIC).

JUDICIAL

Gov. John Kasich on Friday announced the appointments of Jason T. Adams and Ann Marie O'Brien, both of Akron (Summit County), to serve as judges on the Akron Municipal Court. Adams will assume the bench on Wednesday, March 1, and must run in November 2017 to retain the seat for the remainder of the unexpired term, which ends Dec. 31, 2019 while O'Brien will also assume the bench on Wednesday, March 1, and must run in November 2017 to retain the seat for the full term commencing Jan. 3, 2018. Adams replaces Judge Katarina Cook, who was elected to the Summit County Court of Common Pleas; O'Brien replaces Judge Joy Malek Oldfield, who was elected to the Summit County Court of Common Pleas as well.

Kasich also appointed Jeffrey J. Beigel of Sidney to serve as a judge on the Shelby County Court of Common Pleas, Probate and Juvenile Divisions. Beigel will assume office on Feb. 20, 2017, and must run in the November 2018 election to retain the seat for the remainder of the unexpired term, which ends Feb. 8, 2021. Beigel replaces Judge William R. Zimmerman, who resigned.

The Ohio Supreme Court on Tuesday unveiled a shared resources website to encourage local courts to collaborate on projects to save time and money yet still meet their needs. The website acts as a clearinghouse for courts to share their current projects and to find partners for future projects, according to the Court.

MILITARY AFFAIRS

U.S. Rep. Steve Stivers (R-Columbus) was promoted to the rank of brigadier general by the Ohio National Guard (ONG). The Ohio National Guard noted that Stivers is the first general officer in the ONG in more than 100 years to concurrently serve as a member of Congress. He has served in the Ohio Army National Guard for over 30 years.

NATURAL RESOURCES

The Ohio Wildlife Council heard proposals to set Ohio's 2017-2018 deer season dates as follows: Deer archery: Sept. 30, 2017-Feb. 4, 2018; Youth deer gun: Nov. 18-19, 2017; Deer gun: Nov. 27-Dec. 3, 2017 and Dec. 16-17, 2017; and Deer muzzleloader: Jan. 6-9, 2018. A final vote comes on April 12.

The Ohio Department of Natural Resources wants Ohioans to provide input on their favorite outdoor recreational activities and new or expanded recreational opportunities they'd like to see. The department is conducting a survey for its five-year Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, which the agency said serves as a reference document for allocating federal and state grants among projects proposed by park districts around Ohio. The survey is available through Monday, March 8 at <http://parks.ohiodnr.gov/research>.

PEOPLE

Planned Parenthood of Greater Ohio (PPGOH) announced Tuesday that Joanna Saul has joined the organization as its vice president of government affairs and public advocacy. Most recently, Saul served as the executive director of the Correctional Institution Inspection Committee of the Ohio General Assembly.

The Ohio Coalition for Open Government (OCOG) recognized Treasurer Josh Mandel and Rep. Keith Faber (R-Celina) with public service awards and presented its annual "Champion of Open Government" award to Adam White of Lewis Center, a former school board member who battled to keep meetings open in the Olentangy School District Board.

POLITICS

Rob Secaur has joined the Ohio Republican Party as executive director, Chairwoman Jane Timken announced Tuesday. "Ohio Republicans will be well served by Rob's invaluable campaign and political experience," Timken said. "With critical election cycles ahead of us, I am confident that our new executive director will play a key role in maintaining record Republican majorities in the Buckeye State."

SPORTS/ENTERTAINMENT

Reps. David Leland (D-Columbus) -- aka "Mr. Baseball" -- and Thomas West (D-Canton) reintroduced legislation Monday to honor Ohio native Moses Fleetwood Walker, the nation's first professional African American baseball player. HB59 would designate Walker's birthday, Oct. 7, as "Moses Fleetwood Walker Day" in Ohio.

STATE GOVERNMENT

The Ohio Department of Commerce's Division of Unclaimed Funds will be auctioning off the contents of unclaimed safe deposit boxes for the first time since 1998. Among the items in the auction are gold coins, pocket watches and silver ingots. More than 2,000 lots will be auctioned off on Thursday and Friday, Feb. 23 and 24 at Apple Tree Auction Center, 1925 W. Church St., Newark.

Wednesday, Feb. 22 is the deadline to register for the annual event celebrating Ohio's founding on Wednesday, March 1. A joint effort among the Ohio History Connection, Heritage Ohio, the Ohio Academy of History, the Ohio Archaeological Council, the Ohio Local History Alliance, the Ohio Travel Association, the Capitol Square Review and Advisory Board, the Ohio Museums Association, Ohio Humanities, Preservation Ohio, the Ohio Genealogical Society, the Ohio Council for Social Studies, Ohio Historical Records Advisory Board and the Society of Ohio Archivists, Statehood Day will be observed at the Ohio Statehouse beginning at 9 a.m.

TAXATION

The Senate opened hearings Wednesday on Sen. Kevin Bacon's (R-Minerva Park) legislation to extend for another year Ohio's early August sales tax holiday for school clothes and supplies. He told the Senate Ways and Means Committee in sponsor testimony on SB9 (Bacon) that he'd like to see the tax holiday made permanent, but is addressing the concerns of the Kasich administration in proposing a single-year extension.

Reps. Greta Johnson (D-Akron) and Brigid Kelly (D-Columbus) picked up three Republican co-sponsors in Reps. Niraj Antani (Miamisburg), Michael Henne (Clayton) and Nino Vitale (Urbana) among the 20 co-sponsors as they reintroduced legislation in the Ohio House that would eliminate the sales tax on feminine hygiene products. Specifically, HB61 would exempt tampons "and other similar tangible personal property, the principal purpose of which is feminine hygiene in connection with the menstrual cycle."

TECHNOLOGY

Reps. Mike Duffey (R-Worthington) and Christina Hagan (R-Alliance) reintroduced their "DataOhio" transparency legislation that twice passed the Ohio House and which, they said, "seems to have inspired Gov. Kasich to follow suit with government data initiatives in his proposed budget."

TRADE ASSOCIATIONS/LOBBYISTS

The Ohio Newspaper Association announced that it has changed its name to the Ohio News Media Association (ONMA) to respect its history and point to the future.

Former U.S. Rep. Steve Austria and former Ohio Tax Commissioner Tom Zaino announced Monday the launch of ZHF Consulting LLC, a wholly-owned affiliate of the law firm Zaino Hall & Farrin LLC. ZHF Consulting will provide public policy consulting and advocacy services for clients at the federal, state and local levels of government. In addition, they announced that former House Speaker Pro Tempore Rep. Ron Amstutz has also joined ZHF as senior advisor.

TRANSPORTATION

Applying the 28-cent per gallon state motor fuel tax to compressed natural gas (CNG) would "cause great harm to the industry that is already facing headwinds," according to IGS Energy General Counsel Matthew White. During a hearing on the transportation budget, HB26 (McColley), White told the House Finance Committee that the decreased price of diesel fuel and the expiring federal tax credit for CNG have made the environment more difficult for the alternative fuel.

UNIONS

Rep. John Becker (R-Cincinnati) reintroduced legislation on Monday that would allow public sector workers to opt out of union representation, saying it is only a matter of time before Ohio joins other states with so-called "right-to-work" laws. HB53 will remove mandatory union membership requirements for public employees, but would also allow non-union employees to voluntarily make financial contributions to a union. Becker also said the legislation would free unions from the responsibility of representing non-union employees.

UTILITIES

Gov. John Kasich announced the appointment of Lawrence Friedeman, vice president of regulatory affairs and compliance for IGS Energy and former vice president of regulatory affairs for Vectren Retail LLC, to the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio (PUCO) seat originally vacated by former Chairman Andre Porter and recently vacated by former Commissioner M. Howard Petricoff, who stepped aside in the face of pressure from the Ohio Senate. For the seat to be vacated by Commissioner Lynn Slaby in April, the governor appointed Daniel Conway, energy and telecommunications partner at Porter, Wright, Morris & Arthur LLP in Columbus.