

Byers, Minton and Associates

This Week at the Statehouse

March 1, 2019

Around the Square

Final Cabinet Position Filled

On Tuesday, Governor Mike DeWine announced that Dr. Amy Acton will serve as his administration's Director of the Ohio Department of Health. Dr. Acton served as an officer in community research and grants management at the Columbus Foundation, and prior to that served as an assistant professor at The Ohio State University College of Public Health. The physician, who attended Northeastern Ohio University College of Medicine and has over 30 years of experience in multiple fields, filled the last remaining senior cabinet post. Dr. Acton will now head over 1,100 employees at the agency.

Political News and Notes

Gas Tax Sparks Debate

With the transportation budget recommendations looming, the new governor's administration and state legislators have offered differing views on the proposed gas tax increase. Last week, the DeWine Administration unveiled policy recommendations that would increase the gas tax to 18 cents per gallon with annual adjustment for inflation. This would contribute \$1.21 billion to the state's infrastructure and transportation budgets. President Obhof has expressed hesitation on the 18 cents figure but stated that he is working with the administration and Senate Transportation, Commerce and Workforce Committee to coordinate final proposals. Speaker Householder agreed with the DeWine Administration's argument of an existing budget gap for transportation projects, and has spoken on the need for a tax increase to fill an estimated deficit of \$850 million to \$1 billion.

BWC Budget

On Tuesday, the Ohio House began deliberations for the Bureau of Workers' Compensation Budget. BWC CEO Stephanie McCloud presented the employer premium-backed budget package, which will include \$319.8 million and \$324.8 million for FY 2020 and FY 2021, respectively. Many caucus members raised topics of consideration, including adding further business-backed initiatives and alignment with the DeWine Administration's emphasis on investing in Ohio's families and future.

Public Safety Funding

Director of the Ohio Department of Public Safety Tom Stickrath provided testimony on short-term solutions that will allow the department to make it through the upcoming biennium despite a funding shortfall. Director Stickrath cited working with the Office of Budget and Management as well as using technology to cut costs, but also stated the need for a long-term solution for FY 2022 and beyond.

We encourage you to follow BMA (@ByersMinton) on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram for continued updates throughout the week.