

Byers, Minton and Associates

This Week at the Statehouse

March 29, 2019

Around the Square

DeWine Fills PUCO Seat

On Monday, Governor Mike DeWine appointed Dennis Deters, a former judge of the First District Court of Appeals, to fill a partial term for the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio (PUCO). The seat was vacated by former PUCO Chairman Asim Haque, and the term ends April 10, 2021. Mr. Deters was one of four finalists for the seat. The appointment is subject to confirmation by the Ohio Senate.

Political News and Notes

Transportation Budget

This week the House and Senate met in a conference committee to sort out details of the differing House and Senate transportation budget. While some details, such as \$70 million a year for public transportation, were sorted out, more major differences remain. Most notably, the increase in gas tax is still up in the air. In a deal reached between Governor DeWine and Speaker Householder, the House moved to set the gas tax increase to eleven cents per gallon and the diesel tax to twenty cents per gallon, but the Senate rejected the motion. Other issues to be resolved include debate around front license plates, traffic cameras, and hybrid and electric vehicle registration fees.

School Funding

Representatives Cupp and Patterson revealed a proposal this week to redo how Ohio funds its public schools. Ohio's school funding formula has been declared unconstitutional four times since a 1991 lawsuit. The new funding formula includes funding based on student-teacher ratios, more for impoverished student, and a 60-40 standard for the district's share of funding based on property value and income. Funding details, revealed today, show that an additional \$400 million would go toward school funding in fiscal year 2020.

Ohio's Prison Population Grows

This week the Alliance for Safety and Justice released a report showing that Ohio's prison population has continued to grow despite widespread, bipartisan support for criminal justice reform aimed at reducing the prison population. This report focused on how a series of laws passed in 2011 did not reduce Ohio's prison population despite projections that they would. Specifically, the laws downgraded sentences for low-level offenses, reclassified some crimes from felonies to misdemeanors, allowed for early-release of more offenders, and made it hard to send those on parole back to prison. The prison population has likely remained higher than projected due to new laws creating new crimes or enhancing penalties for existing crimes.

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