

Byers, Minton and Associates

This Week at the Statehouse

March 8, 2019

Around the Square

State of the State

On Tuesday, Governor DeWine delivered his first State of the State address to the General Assembly. His top priorities included Ohio's critical infrastructure needs, expanding children's services, increasing workforce development opportunities, clean water and fighting the opioid epidemic. DeWine urged passage of his proposed transportation budget to fill an annual \$1.2 billion deficit for road repairs. He announced a new public health fund to treat opioid abuse by leveraging public-private partnerships and increasing public awareness. His speech also addressed issues facing Ohioans with disabilities and higher education institutions. Finally, he announced a new fund called H2-Q, which will focus on safe and clean water in Ohio, including combatting Lake Erie's harmful algae blooms.

Political News and Notes

Transportation Budget

On Thursday, the Ohio House passed the transportation budget by a vote of 71-27, with twenty Republicans voting against the measure. At the direction of the Governor, the budget was amended to implement a 2-year phase-in of an increased gas tax. The gas tax will increase by \$0.07 in the first year and \$0.37 in the second year. Diesel tax will be raised by \$0.20 over the course of three years. Electric and hybrid vehicles will now be required to pay a registration fee of \$200 and \$100, respectively. As passed, the budget provides \$100 million per year for public transit. The bill now moves to the Senate for consideration.

JobsOhio Reports

JobsOhio released their 2018 Annual Report this week and the company indicated their best year since launching in 2011. In 2018, JobsOhio's portfolio included company commitment to the creation of 27,071 new jobs in Ohio paying over \$1.3 billion. Furthermore, 69,905 jobs in Ohio were retained last year, paying \$4.2 billion. JobsOhio reported a total of \$9.6 billion in capital investment in Ohio in 2018.

Drug Sentencing Focused On Recovery

This week, Senators Eklund and O'Brien introduced Senate Bill 3 to create harsher penalties for drug trafficking and reduce penalties for drug addiction. Current law requires proof that an individual sold, produced or prepared drugs for sale. SB 3 would charge individuals in possession of large quantities of a drug with trafficking. The legislation reduces possession of small amounts of drugs to misdemeanors and ends prosecution for trace amounts of drugs. Current data from the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction details that at any moment, 1,500 to 2,000 individuals are incarcerated in Ohio for low-level felony drug-possession. Estimates indicate this bill could save the state over \$50 million per year.

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