

Byers, Minton and Associates

This Week at the Statehouse

April 12, 2019

Around the Square

H2Ohio Funding

Thursday, House Speaker Larry Householder said that Governor DeWine's proposed H2Ohio Fund will remain in the House version of the state operating budget. The goal of the proposed \$900 million fund is to create a long-term solution to water quality issues in Ohio. The funds will be split between the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency, Ohio Department of Agriculture, and the Ohio Department of Natural Resources. Householder said that there needs to be additional work to ensure that these dollars are well spent but feels it is necessary spending.

Political News and Notes

Sports Betting

This week Reps. Greenspan and Kelly introduced a bill to legalize sports betting in Ohio. Previously, Senators Eklund and O'Brien introduced a similar bill in the Senate. The separate legislation sets the stage for a clash between the two chambers in deciding how to best regulate sports betting in Ohio, which was legalized nationwide a year ago. The proposed legislation in the House gives regulatory control to Ohio Lottery Commission, while the Senate version gives control to the Ohio Casino Control Commission. Governor DeWine has stated that he has not decided which entity he prefers to regulate sports betting, while the Senate President has questioned if the General Assembly even has the authority to legalize sports betting in Ohio. He argued that a constitutional amendment on the statewide ballot may be a preferred method.

State Bailouts

The Ohio General Assembly will soon consider subsidies to save two nuclear power plants in Ohio. The two plants, Perry Nuclear Power and Davis-Besse Nuclear Plant, are run by FirstEnergy Solutions, which is filing for bankruptcy under a restructuring plan. The plants are set to close in two years, and the surrounding communities could face economic distress from the unemployment caused by the shutdown. Legislation has been introduced in previous years to subsidize the cost of these nuclear plants, but has never passed. If the most recent legislation is passed, Ohioans will pay a higher rate on their electric bill.

School Funding Revisions

In 1997, the Supreme Court of Ohio declared Ohio's school funding formula unconstitutional, but the formula has never been fixed. Reps. Cupp and Patterson unveiled a new formula to make school funding more equitable, but many districts say the new formula leaves them behind. District officials for poor, rural schools and poor, urban schools told the House Subcommittee on Primary & Secondary Education that the proposal fails to adequately address the needs of their students. Reps. Cupp and Patterson stated that they will work with these districts to improve the formula to address their concerns.

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