

Byers, Minton and Associates

This Week at the Statehouse

October 18, 2019

Around the Square

Opioid Program

This week Governor Mike DeWine, the Ohio Bureau of Workers' Compensation (BWC) CEO Stephanie McCloud, and RecoveryOhio director Alisha Nelson announced a statewide effort to prevent opioid diversion and addiction in situations in instances where an injured worker is prescribed opioids as part of a BWC claim. Those that have received an opioid prescription for the first time in the last year will receive a drug disposal bag when they fill their prescription. The bags destroy the opioids, via a chemical process, which makes them useless. The bags are biodegradable and cause no environmental harm. The aim of the program is to stop opioid abuse before it starts by creating a safe and easy way for those with prescriptions to destroy leftover medication.

Political News and Notes

FirstEnergy Bankruptcy

On Wednesday a federal judge approved a FirstEnergy bankruptcy restructuring plan. This comes after the company reached a deal with employee unions to not cut their pensions or benefits. Previously Judge Alan Koschik refused to approve any bankruptcy plan until the labor dispute was resolved. The company has said that if the ballot referendum initiative makes it onto the 2020 ballot they will continue with plans to close the Davis-Besse and Perry nuclear power plants in Ohio. Under the approved bankruptcy and restructuring plan FirstEnergy Solutions would split away from its parent company FirstEnergy Corp., and become its own separate company. However, the plan still needs approval from the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission and the Federal Regulatory Commission, which the company hopes to have by the end of the year.

Tobacco Purchasing Age

Ohio Department of Health Director, Dr. Amy Acton, says that the new age restriction on the purchase of tobacco products will help to counteract the impact of vaping companies that targeted young people. The new legal age limit, which went into full effect on Thursday, to purchase any tobacco products is 21. Vaping companies have recently come under fire for advertisements targeting young adults and teens, and raising the smoking age to 21 may help combat this by decreasing access for young adults that are still in high school. This law takes effect in the wake of vaping-related illnesses across Ohio and across the country. Ohio has had 32 reports of such illnesses, and Ohio's median age for these illnesses is 21. With so many youth addicted to nicotine, Dr. Acton has advised that punishing children does not help because it is an addiction, so parents should seek nicotine replacement therapy from their child's doctor.

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

This Week's Bills

HB 368 - Computer Crimes: To enact the Ohio Computer Crimes Act.

HB 369 - Discrimination: To enact the Ohio Fairness Act to prohibit discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity or expression, to add mediation as an informal method that the Ohio Civil Rights Commission may use, and to uphold existing religious exemptions under Ohio's Civil Rights Law.

HB 370 - First Amendment: To allow the Attorney General to defend political subdivisions in certain actions brought under the First Amendment to the United States Constitution or analogous provisions of the Ohio Constitution.

HB 371 - College Tuition: To expand the "Forever Buckeye" program by granting in-state college tuition to individuals who receive a certificate of high school equivalence in Ohio.

HB 372 - License Renewals: To authorize a person to renew specified driver's licenses or state identification cards every eight years beginning July 1, 2021.

SB 217 - Offender License Plate: To create a SORN Law license plate and to require all Tier II and Tier III sex offender and child-victim offenders to display such license plates when operating a vehicle in this state.

SB 218 - School Start Times: To prohibit public schools from beginning the school day earlier than eight-thirty a.m.

SB 219 - Apprentice Program: To establish a career pathways apprentice program.

SB 220 - Day Designation: To designate February 13 as "Aortic Aneurysm Awareness Day."

SB 221 - Firearms Laws: To provide for the issuance in specified circumstances of a Safety Protection Order to apply regarding a person who a court determines is under a drug dependency, chronic alcoholic, or mental health-related firearms disability; to specify LEADS and NCIC reporting and removal procedures for current types of protection orders; to require the submission to the Attorney General for inclusion in LEADS of findings of IST or NGRI; continued...

SB 222 - Auxiliary Containers: To authorize the use of an auxiliary container for any purpose, to prohibit the imposition of a tax or fee on those containers, and to apply existing anti-littering law to those containers.

SB 223 - Firearms: To generally prohibit a person from possessing trigger cranks, bump-fire devices, or other items that accelerate a semi-automatic firearm's rate of fire but do not convert it into an automatic firearm and large capacity magazines.

SB 224 - School Funding: To provide an additional school funding payment for fiscal years 2020 and 2021 for school districts that were subject to the cap that restricted increases in aggregate funding in fiscal year 2019 and satisfy other criteria.

SB 225- Child Abuse Signs: To require public schools to post signs with a child abuse reporting telephone number.

SCR 6- Robocalls: To urge the Congress of the United States to grant additional authority to the Federal Communications Commission to stop unwanted robocalls and "call spoofing" and to urge the Commission to educate the public on how to report illegal telephone calls.

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