

Byers, Minton and Associates

This Week at the Statehouse

November 22, 2019

Around the Square

Holiday Spending

Retail forecasters are predicting that Ohio shoppers will spend an additional \$200 million on holiday purchases this year compared to 2018, which is an increase of about 0.8%. Last year Ohio consumers spent \$25.1 billion around the holidays, and that number is predicted to be closer to \$25.3 billion this year. National projections predict a 2.7 - 5 percent growth in holiday retail sales. Still, such an increase will be beneficial to the state of Ohio, which will generate increased sales tax revenue, which has shown consistent growth this year.

Political News and Notes

Water Quality

On Tuesday the U.S. EPA announced five grants totaling \$3.6 million to clean and protect Lake Erie. The grants will remove the Brecksville dam on the Cuyahoga River, stabilize the Euclid Creek banks, control invasive species, address areas of concern across the lake, reduce phosphorous runoff, and improve the Sandusky Bay wetlands. These grants are a part of the broader Great Lakes Restoration Initiative and a part of its current five-year plan. Lake Erie faces problems including algal blooms caused by phosphorous runoff from the Maumee River watershed. These grants will be administered by a number of entities, including the Ohio EPA, the Ohio Lake Erie Commission, and the Ohio Department of Natural Resources.

Driver's Licenses

Representative Derek Merrin (R-Monclova) introduced new legislation aimed at reducing lines at the Bureau of Motor Vehicles (BMV). House Bill 372, if passed would allow individuals to choose between selecting a four- or eight-year driver's license, motorcycle license, commercial truck license, or photo identification card. An 8 year license would cost \$50.50 compared to \$25.75 for a 4 year license. Approximately 2.2 million Ohioans renew their license at the Ohio BMV each year. Merrin says that if everyone opted in for the 8 year option, lines would be reduced by 50 percent. An eight year license already exists in 23 other states and D.C.

Cyber Crimes

This week state lawmakers heard testimony on legislation that overhauls computer crime laws in the State of Ohio. The bill, introduced by Rep. Baldrige, creates additional computer crimes that can be charged, and creates new penalties for those that are deemed "black hat" hackers. "Black hat" hackers are those that hack into systems with personal interest in mind, while "white hat" hackers expose weaknesses within system in order to notify the owner. Proponents say such legislation is needed because the progress of technology has outpaced state laws. However, opponents say that this bill is unlikely to have any effect on cyber attacks that are committed outside of the country or even the state, which is the majority of all hacking. Malware, or phishing scams. The cost to extradite such individuals is not feasible for a local prosecutor.

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

This Week's Bills

HB 416 - Week Designation: To designate Health Insurance Participation Week.

HB 417 - Day Designation: To designate May 23 as "William Hoy Day."

HB 418 - Medication Switching: Regarding prescription drugs and medication switching.

HB 419 - Watercraft Sales: To exempt the seasonal storage or use of certain watercraft purchased outside Ohio from state and local use taxes.

HCR 20 - Medicaid Waivers: To urge Congress to standardize home and community-based Medicaid waiver programs to better accommodate military families with special needs.

SB 239 - Sexting: To generally prohibit sexting by a person under 19 years of age.

SB 240 - Child Facilities: Regarding children's crisis care facilities.

SB 241- Mental Health Coverage: To amend the mental health insurance coverage parity law.

SCR 10 - Local Health Standards: To approve the Director of Health's proposed revision of Chapter 3701-36 of the Ohio Administrative Code establishing standards to be met by boards of health and local health departments and procedures for payment of state subsidies for meeting those requirements.

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