

Byers, Minton and Associates

This Week at the Statehouse

December 13, 2019

Around the Square

Statehouse Race

Less than a month after launching his bid for the Ohio House 76th District seat, Senator John Eklund has ended his campaign. Eklund, who has served as a state senator in Geauga County since 2011, is term limited. He planned to run against incumbent state representative Diane Grendell. The 76th House District covers northern Portage County and southern and western Geauga County. Senator Eklund decided to suspend his campaign, saying that he faced significant challenges and an uphill battle in running against an incumbent, backed by the Ohio House Republican Caucus.

Political News and Notes

Plastic Bag Ban

This week the Ohio House passed House Bill 242, which, if enacted, will prohibit local governments from banning single-use plastics, such as plastic grocery bags, cups, and straws. This legislation was introduced in the House, along with a companion bill in the Senate, after several local governments, including Cuyahoga County, Orange Village, and Bexley, put such bans into place. Supporters of HB 242 say that such bans make it difficult for businesses to operate in multiple municipalities because they have to navigate multiple local governments and feel that it hurts small businesses with tight profit margins. However, critics of the legislation say that the bill preempts local control and prevents localities from taking action to help the environmental problems caused by single use plastics.

Voter Fraud

Ohio Secretary of State Frank LaRose announced this week that eighteen people voted in Ohio as well as in another state in the November 2018 general election. It is a criminal act to vote in two states, and of those eighteen voters, ten people cast their second ballot in Ohio, so they will be prosecuted in Ohio. The other eight voted in Ohio first and another state second, so the cases will be referred to the appropriate prosecutor in the state's that a second vote occurred. Votes were cast illegally in Cuyahoga, Franklin, Geauga, Lorain, Medina, Summit, and Wayne counties. Approximately 4.5 million people voted in the November 2018 election, making cases of illegal ballots far less than one percent, as it is an extremely rare issue.

Governor's Signatures

This week Governor DeWine signed several bills into law including Senate Bill 5 which increases penalties for promoting prostitution. SB 5 expands the number of cases that fall under a third-degree felony and also creates a second degree felony charge for those that have previously been convicted two or more times for promoting prostitution. The bill passed quickly out of the Senate, but stalled in the legislature due to concerns over increasing penalties. It quickly gained momentum after several amendments alleviated concerns.

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

This Week's Bills

HB 439 - Homestead Exemption: To adjust for inflation the \$25,000 homestead exemption and the enhanced homestead exemption for disabled veterans.

HB 440 - Tax Exemption: To authorize sales tax exemptions for property and services used to clean or maintain manufacturing machinery and for employment services used to operate manufacturing machinery.

HB 441 - Dementia Training: To require peace officers and emergency medical service personnel to undergo training on identifying and interacting with individuals with dementia.

HB 442 - CPA Certificates: To modify the requirements to obtain a certified public accountant certificate.

HB 443 - Insurance Coverage: Regarding mental health and substance use disorder benefit parity.

HB 444 - Township Laws: To make various changes to township law.

HB 445 - Motorcycle Headlights: To clarify that a motorcycle may have a modulating headlight that meets federal standards.

HB 446 - License Plate: To create the "Stop Elder Abuse" license plate.

HB 447 - School Safety: To establish the School Safety Advisory Committee.

HB 448 - School Credit: To enact Matthew's Law, requiring public buildings to have at least one rest room facility with an adult changing station and authorizing an income tax credit for installation.

HCR 21 - Day Designation: To declare February 14, 2020, as "Ohio Loves Transit Day" and encourage all Ohioans to participate in the events taking place across Ohio during the week of and on February 14, 2020, to celebrate the importance of public transit in Ohio.

SB 250 - Radiation Equipment: Regarding the authority of a physician to operate certain radiation-generating equipment.

SB 251 - Infant Sleep Program: To require child care providers to complete an annual infant safe sleep education program established by the Department of Job and Family Services and to make an appropriation.

SB 252 - Drug Treatment: To prohibit "fail first" coverage of drugs used to treat stage four advanced metastatic cancer.

SB 253 - School Threats: Regarding expulsion of a student from a public school for communicating a threat of violence to occur on school grounds.

SB 254 - Mental Health Benefits: Regarding mental health and substance use disorder benefit parity.

SJR 3 - Tax Increases: Proposing to enact Section 7 of Article XII of the Constitution of the State of Ohio to require that any increase in income tax rates be approved by a supermajority of the membership of each house of the General Assembly.

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