

Byers, Minton and Associates

This Week at the Statehouse

February 7, 2020

Around the Square

Public Utilities Appointment

On Thursday Governor DeWine reappointed Commissioner Lawrence Friedeman to the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio for a five-year term. Friedeman, the only Democrat on the five-member panel, was selected among three other finalists. Commissioner Friedeman's new term will begin this April 11 and end April 10, 2025.

Voucher Program Reform

The Ohio House voted to replace the EdChoice Scholarship Program with the Buckeye Opportunity Scholarship, a voucher system based on family income. Under current law, EdChoice provides private school tuition for students at public schools that fail to satisfy state performance guidelines. Students currently enrolled in the voucher program will retain their funding through graduation, but new voucher eligibility will depend on family income. Families earning up to 250% of the federal poverty guidelines will become eligible for full tuition funding, while pro-rated tuition will become available for those families making up to 300% of the federal guidelines. Importantly, funding for vouchers under the House's new plan will source from a budget appropriation rather than a deduction from school districts' funding. This legislation precedes an anticipated double in the number of low-performing school districts for the next academic year, whose students will become eligible for vouchers under current EdChoice policy. The bill also stops the creation of Academic Distress Commissions until 2024. The overwhelmingly supported bill, which passed the House 88-7, now faces apparent opposition in the Ohio Senate.

Political News and Notes

School Bus Safety

The Ohio Senate passed a bill that aims to curb unsafe driving around school buses. New code, which must still be addressed by the House, introduces felony charges and longer suspensions of driving privileges for individuals who illegally pass school buses. Additionally, the bill includes \$250,000 in grants that enable school districts to purchase cameras for their busses.

Minimum Wage Ballot Initiative

Language submitted by Ohioans for Raising the Wage has received final approval from the Ohio Ballot Board and Ohio Secretary of State Frank LaRose to start compiling signatures for a petition that would incrementally raise the minimum wage for non-tipped workers, after determining that their ballot language constitutes a single issue. The proposed constitutional amendment aims to increase wages from \$8.70 to \$13 over a 5 year period. Afterward, the minimum wage will continue to adjust for inflation. The initiative requires nearly 453,000 signatures from registered voters in half of Ohio's counties before July 1st to secure a spot on the November ballot.

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

This Week's Bills

HB 490 - Vehicle Fees: To provide for the proration of the plug-in electric and hybrid motor vehicle registration fees.

HB 491 - Awareness Day: To designate the fifteenth day of February as "Plastic Pollution Awareness Day."

HB 492 - Physician Assistants: To modify the laws regarding physician assistants.

HB 493 - School Attendance: To permit a child whose parents live in different school districts to continue to attend school in the school district in which the child attended school at the beginning of the school year even if the child moves to a different school district.

HB 494: Teacher Loans: To establish a loan repayment program for eligible teachers.

HB 495 - Farm Buses: To increase the motor vehicle registration period for a farm bus.

HB 496 - Bee Stings: To grant specified apiary owners immunity in personal injury or property damage cases involving bee stings.

HB 497: Drinking Water: To require the Director of Environmental Protection to adopt rules establishing maximum allowable contaminant levels in drinking water and water quality standards for certain contaminants.

SB 267 - Month Designation: To designate August as "Bone Marrow Donation Awareness Month."

SB 268 - Capital Appropriations: To modify the purpose of a capital appropriation.

SB 269 - License Plate: To create the "Cuyahoga Valley Scenic Railroad" license plate.

SB 270 - Jail Standards: To adopt several jail reform procedures related to compliance with the Minimum Standards for Jails in Ohio.

SB 271 - Inmate Drug Withdrawal: To enact Sean's Law to establish rules and procedures for an inmate who is found to be at risk of withdrawal from benzodiazepines, alcohol, and other addictive drugs.

SB 272 - Physical Therapy: To enter into the Physical Therapy Licensure Compact.

SB 273 - Property Taxes: To reduce property taxes on owner-occupied homes to the extent the taxes increase by more than 10% per year and to prohibit political subdivisions from placing a lien on property for unpaid water charges.

SB 274 - Liquor Permits: To create the F-11 liquor permit, which authorizes specified entities to sell beer and wine at special functions, including social and benevolent functions.

SCR 11 - Youngstown Base: To urge the United States Department of Defense to select Youngstown Air Reserve Station as the home for the new C-130J Hercules aircraft.

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