

Byers, Minton and Associates

This Week at the Statehouse
December 14, 2018

Political News and Notes

Lawmakers Approve Crew Stadium, Other Funding

Almost \$54 million in state funding was appropriated for various projects in a bill passed this Thursday. A portion of the funds involved \$15 million designated for a new downtown Columbus Crew soccer stadium, which will be supplemented by an additional \$50 million each from the City of Columbus and Franklin County. Other spending items included \$20 million to reconstruct the Ohio Statehouse parking garage, \$15 million for flood-control efforts in Findlay and \$2 million for repairs to the Ohio Governor's Mansion. The bill also facilitates improvement of the Lake Erie shoreline and surrounding areas.

Legislation Awaits Vetoes and Overrides

A marathon day of lawmaking wrapped up early this morning and concluded with several pieces of legislation headed to the Governor's desk for signatures. The Senate and House both worked until after midnight and are expected to meet in Columbus at some point next week to finalize bills and override any potential Governor vetoes. Stakeholders are keeping particularly close watch over a pair of divisive abortion bills and a firearms measure to see whether or not the Governor will sign off. Other bills awaiting approval include pay raises for elected officials, an overhaul of the state's telecommunications regulations and revised statutes for physicians assistants, dentists and dental hygienists.

Crime Bills Await Governor's Signature

Legislators passed several crime bills this week, including tracking rape kit testing, increasing penalties for public indecency involving minors and expanding punishment for sexual imposition committed by a previous offender. Senate Bill 231, nicknamed "Sierah's Law" after a young woman who was kidnapped and killed in 2016, creates a violent offender registry database. The bill would assist police with the identification of violent offenders by creating a geographically searchable database similar to the state's sex offender registry. Another bill, in honor of slain Ohio State student Reagan Tokes, returns indefinite sentencing for individuals convicted of certain crimes to encourage inmates to improve themselves while behind bars.

Around the Square

Budget Surplus Continues Upward Trend

Ohio is on track to beat budget analysts' predictions for a fiscal year-ending surplus, leaving finances in good order for the incoming administration. Office of Budget and Management Director Tim Keen stated last week that the state was slightly over-performing on the revenue side as well as the spending side. November tax receipts totaled \$2.046 billion and were 3.3 percent more than preliminary data had predicted. Under-spending in November also totaled almost \$300 million, well below the estimate. Director Keen predicted that the year-end surplus could be close to \$386 million, which will be determined by the new OBM Director next year.

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