

# Byers, Minton and Associates

This Week at the Statehouse  
December 7, 2018

## Political News and Notes

### Graduation Requirements Sent to Governor

A measure extending relaxed graduation requirements was sent to the Governor on Thursday after the House concurred with changes made by the Senate earlier that day. Lawmakers extended requirements for end-of-course exams, capstone projects and community service hours to apply to the classes of 2019 and 2020. The State Board of Education was joined by many legislators in their call for a long-term plan to take effect for the class of 2022. A transition plan to new graduation requirements is expected by April 1 of next year.

### Divisive Bills Scaled Back, Delayed

Of the many bills the Ohio House and Senate are debating during the lame duck session, two in particular have sparked fierce debates and drawn attention from advocates on all sides of the issues. A vote on House Bill 258, informally dubbed the “Heartbeat Bill”, was pushed back in the Senate to allow for possible amendments. The bill was passed by the House in November, and depending on the Senate’s actions next week, may be vetoed by Governor Kasich before the new year. Another controversial piece of legislation, House Bill 228 or the “stand-your-ground” bill, was stripped of its most divisive provision before being sent to Governor Kasich’s desk. The Senate Government Oversight and Reform Committee eliminated the duty to retreat clause before the legislation passed the Senate and the House concurred with the changes.

### Senate Successor Named

State Representative Brian Hill of Zanesville has been selected to fill the vacant Senate seat created by Congressman Troy Balderson’s election to the United States House of Representatives earlier this year. Senate Republicans chose Representative Hill from 8 other applicants, and House Republicans will now be tasked with choosing his successor for the 97th House District.

### Marijuana Patient Registry Begins

Ohio’s online patient registry portal for medicinal marijuana went live on Monday. Four months after the program was originally supposed to be up and running, the State Board of Pharmacy has announced that medicinal products will be available for patients within 60 days. Physicians who have been certified by the State Medical Board may begin patient prescription.

## Around the Square

### Infant Mortality Decreases but with Racial Disparities

Officials from the Ohio Department of Health have reported that the overall number of infant deaths in the state of Ohio decreased from 2016 to 2017, however racial disparities continued as black infant deaths increased. Department Director Lance Himes stated that although more babies reached their first birthdays, Ohio needs to work toward eliminating racial differences in birth outcomes. The state recorded 982 infant deaths in 2017, which is only the second time that Ohio has had fewer than 1,000 infant deaths since the state began recording infant mortality in 1939.

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