

Byers, Minton and Associates

This Week at the Statehouse

October 25, 2019

Around the Square

FirstEnergy Ballot Referendum

Ohioans Against Corporate Bailouts failed to gather the 265,774 signatures needed by October 21 to challenge a controversial energy law on this fall's ballot. After failing to gather enough signatures by the deadline, the group asked a federal judge to grant them an extension to gather signatures. They felt an extension was warranted because petitioners have 90 days to gather signatures, but the group said the requirement to receive approval of petition language by the Attorney General and Secretary of State took up 38 of those 90 days. Judge Sargus, who presided over the case, felt that it was better left to the Ohio Supreme Court, which could determine a number of factors such as whether or not Ohio's constitutional right to referendum guarantees a full 90 days for signature gathering only. However, the Ohio Supreme Court could refuse to answer such questions. Until then, House Bill 6 has been enacted into law.

Political News and Notes

Rumble Strips

In the last five years, more than 500 individuals in Ohio have died after a driver crossed left of center on an undivided highway. One of the best ways to prevent such fatalities is through the addition of rumble strips down the center of roads. Rumble strips alert drivers that they are beginning to leave their lane by causing their car to shake and producing a loud buzzing noise. A bill to require the Ohio Department of Transportation to gradually install rumble strips on all undivided, two-way highways with speed limits higher than 45 miles per hour has already passed out of the House. According to the Federal Highway Administration, the addition of rumble strips to rural two-lane roads reduces crashes by 45 percent and on urban two-lane roads, crashes are reduced by 64 percent. Their installation costs \$700 to \$1,025 per mile. The bill is currently being heard in the Senate Transportation Committee.

Tax Levy Language

This week the Ohio House voted 54-39 to pass House Bill 76, which changes how proposed tax levies are described in ballot language. Currently, proposed tax levies are described as a dollar amount of \$100 of a property's taxable value, which is a fraction on a property's market value. If enacted into law, HB 76 would express tax increase effects in terms of \$100,000 in property value. Proponents of the legislation hope that this will bring more transparency to voters by showing what they feel is a clearer and more accurate depiction of tax changes, since homes are not valued close to \$100. The bill's sponsor, Representative Derrick Merrin, specifically feels that it will perhaps lead more people to vote 'yes' on tax increases because of improved understanding. However, many local governments and school districts worry that the change will confuse people and lead to more 'no' votes on tax levies. Furthermore, local governments feel this measure is misleading due to a number of factors that affect a taxpayer's final bill, such as the type of property and discounts like Homestead Exemption. The bill now faces consideration in the Senate.

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

This Week's Bills

HB 373 - Auctioneer Licenses: To eliminate the apprentice auctioneer and special auctioneer's license and to make other revisions to the law governing auctions.

HB 374 - Massage Therapy: To make changes to the massage therapy licensing law.

HB 375 - Road Naming: To authorize a refundable income tax credit for individuals who pay an extracurricular activity fee on behalf of a student from a low-income family.

HB 376 - Road Naming: To designate a portion of Interstate Route 76 in Portage County the "CPL Benjamin C. Dillon Memorial Highway."

HB 377 - Road Naming: To designate a portion of State Route 13 in Knox County as the "William 'Bill' Burgett Memorial Highway."

HB 378 - Unemployment Benefits: To provide unemployment benefits to striking workers and to declare an emergency.

HB 379 - Day Designation: To designate April 26 as "Diabetic Ketoacidosis (DKA) Day."

HB 380- Construction Payments: To require owners of construction projects to pay a contractor within thirty-five days of receiving a request for payment.

HB 381 - Self-Defense: To enact the Ohio Stand Your Ground Act to modify the law regarding self-defense.

HR 247 - E-Check: To respectfully urge Congress and President Donald Trump to amend the Federal Clean Air Act to eliminate the requirement to implement the E-Check Program and direct the Administrator of USEPA to begin new rule-making procedures under the Administrative Procedures Act to repeal and replace the 2015 National Ambient Air Quality Standards; to respectfully urge Congress and President Donald Trump to pass legislation to achieve improvements in air quality more efficiently while allowing companies to innovate and help the economy grow; to urge the Administrator of USEPA to alleviate burdensome requirements of the E-Check Program and the Clean Air Act if Congress and the President fail to act; and to encourage OEPA to explore alternatives to E-Check in Ohio.

HCR 16 - Right to Organize: To urge the Congress of the United States to enact the Protecting the Right to Organize Act of 2019.

HCR 17 - Food Assistance: Urging Congress to expand Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program eligibility to include the households of striking workers.

SB 226 - School Transportation: To require school districts to provide transportation for students in grades 9-12, to have the pupil transportation formula operate for fiscal years 2020 and 2021, and to make an appropriation.

SB 227- Road Naming: To designate a portion of State Route 2 in Cuyahoga County as the "PVT John R. Towle, Medal of Honor Recipient, Memorial Highway."

SB 228 - Road Naming: To designate a portion of United States Route 22 in Fairfield County as the "Officer M. Scott Moyer Memorial Highway."

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