

Week in Review

Friday, April 8, 2011

FY12-13 BUDGET

Hearings continued -- and concluded -- this week in the five subcommittees of the House Finance and Appropriations Committee on the proposed FY12-13 budget as they moved to accepting public testimony on the various proposals. Now, attention shifts to the full committee which will hold four days of public testimony the week of April 11.

A comparison of the new school funding formula with the old evidence-based model in budget testimony Friday was complicated by the fact that, at the moment, there is nothing that can be genuinely described as the Kasich school funding formula. His newly appointed education finance hawk, Barbara Mattei-Smith, acknowledged as much in testimony before the House Primary and Secondary Education Subcommittee, where she described Kasich's current K-12 budget as a stop-gap proposal until a fully restructured model of school funding can be completed by 2012.

Chancellor Jim Petro pressed the case for the Kasich administration's higher education budget before the Higher Education Subcommittee. That plan includes (1) charter or "entrepreneurial" universities, (2) reduced academic remediation, (3) three-year bachelors' degrees, (4) increased faculty teaching loads, (5) reduced program redundancy, (6) construction reform, and (7) research commercialization. However, he ran into skepticism even from Republican members of the subcommittee.

Reps. Debbie Phillips (D-Athens) and Matt Lundy (D-Elyria), members of the Primary and Secondary Education Subcommittee that is hearing testimony on Gov. John Kasich's education budget proposals, made a public records request of his administration Wednesday demanding more data on the budget's effect on school districts. The request was sent to Robert Sommers, director of the governor's Office of 21st Century Education. They said the move was due to frustration that administration staff have been unable to answer their questions during testimony.

Gov. John Kasich's proposed budget could lead to the loss of 51,000 jobs in school districts, universities and state and local government agencies, according to a report released Thursday by Innovation Ohio. That

calculation is based on an assumption that 75 percent of proposed cuts would be filled with personnel cuts, because public employee compensation is generally the largest share of local governments' costs. The group made an exception for cuts to state personnel lines, where 100 percent of money goes to compensation.

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Secretary of State Jon Husted said Friday that his office had received the signed copy of SB5, the overhaul of the state's collective bargaining law, so that its effective date will be July 1 and the deadline for filing the referendum petitions is June 30.

Opponents of the collective bargaining overhaul in SB5 (Jones) Monday delivered initial petition signatures to the secretary of state's office in their drive to force repeal of the new law at the ballot. This first petition needs at least 1,000 valid signatures to put the law on hold pending a larger signature collection effort, which will need about 231,000 valid signatures to make the November 2011 ballot. Opponents filed two different petitions.

EDUCATION

Former State School Board of Education Martha Harris has dropped the lawsuit she filed against Gov. John Kasich and other state officials after Kasich replaced her when it was discovered her paperwork was never properly submitted for confirmation by the Senate.

The Senate agreed to remove its amendments from HB36 (Kozlowski-Carey), the bill which extends the number of calamity days available to school districts from three to five, so it can become effective for the current school year upon the governor's signature. Senate President Tom Niehaus (R-New Richmond) said the other issues including requiring public school districts to provide transportation for charter school students making up calamity days and allowing for more online classes to replace missed school days did not have "the urgency" that the calamity days did and could be dealt with later.

Following his appointment of State Board of Education member Tammy O'Brien to the Summit County Court of Common Pleas, Gov. John Kasich named former state Rep. Bryan Williams to her District 7 seat on the board.

ELECTIONS

Reps. Bob Hagan (D-Youngstown) and Mike Foley (D-Cleveland) announced legislation Wednesday that would set up a recall process for statewide officeholders and legislators. It would allow for a recall ballot if a petition is signed by 15 percent of registered voters statewide who voted in the previous gubernatorial election in the case of a statewide officeholder, or 15 percent of registered voters who voted for a particular legislative seat in the last General Election. They admitted that the idea is driven by their displeasure with Gov. John Kasich and his support of SB5 (Jones), the collective bargaining bill that is headed towards a referendum. They expect to formally introduce the bill next week.

Secretary of State Jon Husted told the League of Women Voters of Ohio Thursday he believes many of the problems in the voter ID debate can be resolved by requiring a full nine-digit Social Security number as one of the "unique identifiers" when voting by mail or provisionally. He said he believes he has a better plan and that he is hoping to convince state legislators that it is a compromise between the concerns cited by both sides in the debate over HB159 (Mecklenborg-Blessing).

GENERAL ASSEMBLY/STATEHOUSE

Senate President Tom Niehaus (R-New Richmond) told reporters following Wednesday's floor session that Sen. Bill Seitz (R-Cincinnati) has been replaced as chair of the Senate Government Oversight and Reform Committee as "a message to Seitz and other committee chairmen" that he wants members to work closely not only with members of the committees but also with bill sponsors. At issue was the acceptance of a substitute version of SB3, the pension reform bill, without communicating that with the bill sponsor. Coincidentally that sponsor, Sen. Keith Faber (R-Celina), is the new chair of the oversight committee.

HIGHER EDUCATION

Ohio State University's President E. Gordon Gee's compensation of \$1.3 million is the highest of any public university president in the nation, the annual salary survey by the Chronicle of Higher Education found. Gee was also first in "total cost of employment," a new metric in this year's survey which includes all money a university and state set aside for a president. Gee's total cost of employment was \$1.8 million.

Cleveland State University named John Parry athletic director. He had been serving as interim director since May 2010.

Gov. John Kasich reappointed the Limited's Les Wexner to the Ohio State University Board of Trustees for a new term beginning May 14, 2011 and ending May 13, 2020.

Chancellor Jim Petro laid out the governor's top priorities for higher education in his first meeting of the Board of Regents Wednesday, telling members that the state can do more to create a student-centered P-16 system that actively promotes college-level coursework for high school seniors, provides a formal path to three-year college degrees, and allows gifted and other non-standard K-12 learners to achieve at their own pace.

U.S. House Speaker John Boehner (R-West Chester) will be the speaker for Ohio State's spring commencement, the university announced on Wednesday. The commencement ceremony will be held at noon on Sunday, June 12 in Ohio Stadium. About 8,500 graduates are expected to receive their degrees at the ceremony.

The presidents of Columbus State Community College and Ohio State University Tuesday unveiled the Preferred Pathway Program, a collaboration that will provide qualified Columbus State students a guaranteed, guided route to an Ohio State baccalaureate degree.

PEOPLE

Former state Rep. Todd Book (D-McDermott) was appointed by Gov. John Kasich to the State Racing Commission for a term running from April 1, 2011 through March 31, 2015.

Former Ohio Gov. Ted Strickland will not become the new Democratic National Committee chairman, coming in second to U.S. Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz. The slot opened up after former chair Tim Kaine resigned to run for the U.S. Senate from Virginia.

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