

# OFT Legislative Week in Review

## Friday, April 22, 2011

### **FY12-13 BUDGET**

Ohio's budget pains are drawing national coverage as the Legislature prepares for a substitute version of HB153 (Amstutz). Although revenue is up, Senate finance director Brian Perera told Stateline.org, Ohio is still digging itself out of a huge hole that will take more than accelerated tax collections to level out. His remarks came as fiscal officers from around the country discussed their mutual budget woes during a meeting of the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) in Washington, D.C. Though revenue collections are improving, most states still trail levels prior to 2007, Stateline.org noted.

**The coalition Ohio's Campaign for Jobs, which is funded by the Partnership for Ohio's Future and includes ABC of Ohio; Cincinnati USA Regional Chamber; Columbus Partnership; Dayton Area Chamber of Commerce; Greater Cleveland Partnership; NFIB-Ohio; Ohio Business Roundtable; Ohio Council of Retail Merchants; Ohio Chamber of Commerce; Ohio Grocers Association; Ohio Society of CPAs; and the Toledo Regional Chamber of Commerce, has said it will work to support the Kasich budget for FY12-13.**

As expected, the House Finance and Appropriations Committee scheduled the release of its substitute budget bill for a hearing at 4:30 p.m. Thursday, April 28. The committee will then hear public testimony Friday, April 29, Saturday, April 30 and Monday, May 2.

Reps. Matt Lundy (D-Elyria) and Debbie Phillips (D-Athens) threatened to sue Gov. John Kasich's administration after saying they received a blanket denial of a public records request for information on his education budget proposal. Kasich spokesman Rob Nichols said the two Democrats were asking for records that don't exist and essentially trying to get the governor's office to do research for them.

### **COLLECTIVE BARGAINING**

Opponents of Ohio's overhaul of its collective bargaining law, SB5 (Jones), are now gathering signatures to put the issue on the November ballot following Friday's certification from the attorney general's office that the proposed "short" summary of the ballot issue was "fair and accurate" and certification from the secretary of state's office that that measure had the 1,000 valid signatures needed to trigger the larger signature gathering process. Opponents now need to gather a total of 231,147 valid signatures from at least 44 counties by June 30 to place it on the ballot.

We Are Ohio, the coalition pushing the collective bargaining referendum, said it plans to put 100,000 petition booklets on the street, and has heard from 10,000 people who are interested in gathering signatures.

### **CORRECTIONS**

Policy Matters Ohio released a new report Monday questioning the state's calculations on the savings private prisons have brought to the state, calling them "flawed and riddled with errors." The report maintains the state has not reliably demonstrated the private prison savings as required by Ohio law.

### **EDUCATION**

Families applying for the EdChoice Scholarship have once again exceeded the statutory cap of 14,000 school vouchers, which are worth up to \$4,250 per year at the elementary and middle school level and up to \$5,000 per year at the high school level. With the application period for 2011-12 now closed, the Ohio Department of Education said parents of 15,397 students are seeking private enrollment in the coming academic year. Of those, 11,941 are renewals and 3,456 are new applicants.

Ohio State University and the Ohio Department of Education have begun training Ohio school principals in executive management and leadership at Ohio State's new Executive Principals Leadership Academy. The program is designed to help principals revitalize their schools and school communities and improve the teaching and learning environment for teachers and students. The academy was created using a two-year, \$3 million grant funded through a portion of Ohio's "Race to the Top" school improvement grant and other federal money designed to spur change in Ohio's education system.

## **ELECTIONS 2012**

A survey from conservative pollster Wenzel Strategies found Ohio's Sen. Sherrod Brown (D) leads three potential Republican challengers but is "in very dangerous political waters when it comes to the opinions that likely voters hold toward him." Wenzel found that just 41 percent of likely Ohio voters statewide have a favorable opinion of him and just 40 percent give him positive marks for the job he is doing.

Former Sen. Kevin Coughlin (R-Cuyahoga Falls) has filed paperwork with the Federal Elections Commission to begin raising money for a possible run for U.S. Senate in 2012, the Toledo Blade reported. State Treasurer Josh Mandel has also filed paperwork to begin raising money but has not made a formal announcement. **Ken Blackwell may get into the senate race as well.**

## **GENERAL ASSEMBLY/STATEHOUSE**

Reps. Michael Stinziano (D-Columbus) and Nickie Antonio (D-Lakewood) introduced anti-bullying legislation, HB208, that would prohibit harassment, intimidation and bullying based on sexual orientation or gender identity. The new bill is one of multiple proposals to address bullying or cyber-bullying introduced in this General Assembly, including HB155 (Fedor-Garland), HB116 (Barnes) and SB127 (Schiavoni).

The "2011-12 Ohio Government Directory" from the Ohio Trucking Association (OTA) is now available. It includes pictures of the members of the 129th General Assembly, the governor's cabinet, statewide officeholders and Ohio's congressional delegation - a great help in a time of term limits. The price is \$24 each for one to nine copies or \$21 each for 10 or more copies, plus tax.

The Capitol Square Review and Advisory Board (CSRAB) approved a list of eight exclusive caterers for Statehouse events, including Milo's Catering and Banquet Service, which also won the contract to run Capitol Cafe and hold the Statehouse liquor license.

CSRAB also voted to increase evening and weekend parking rates in the Statehouse garage.

## **PENSION FUNDS**

The State Teachers Retirement System trustees board voted to increase the share of health care premiums retirees pay in an effort to reduce liabilities for its health care fund, which is projected to last until 2024 under current conditions. The board voted to phase in a reduction to the years-of-service multiplier in its Ohio Health Care Program from 2.5 percent to 2.1 percent, reducing the multiplier by a tenth of a percentage point each year starting in 2012.

## **REDISTRICTING/REAPPORTIONMENT**

House State Government and Elections Redistricting Subcommittee Chairman Matt Huffman (R-Lima) said the subcommittee will start the process of drawing 16 congressional districts for the state after the budget leaves the House. He plans to hold the organizational hearing the week of May 9, with the initial hearing likely to consist of testimony from the Legislative Service Commission. That will be followed by hearings soliciting public input that will be held around the state. A bill will follow later, he said.

## **STATE GOVERNMENT**

ProgressOhio joined Sen. Mike Skindell (D-Lakewood) and Rep. Dennis Murray (D-Sandusky) in filing a lawsuit in the Ohio Supreme Court claiming that legislation creating a private entity to oversee Ohio's economic development efforts -- JobsOhio -- is unconstitutional. They cite seven reasons, including that it authorizes the existence of a corporation, sets out statutory requirements, and then exempts that corporation from general laws governing corporations; it creates a second statutory position for the governor; it creates a joint venture between the state and a private corporation and makes the state a stockholder in that entity; and it creates an appropriation for longer than two years.

**2011 -- Provided by The Hannah Report -**