



COMMERCIAL REAL ESTATE
DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION

NAIOP OF OHIO

NAIOP Weekly Legislative Report
Prepared by: Law Offices of Matthew G. Kallner
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Supported Bills

- HB10** **REMEDIATION OF CONTAMINATED SITE (SEARS B)** To authorize refundable tax credits for the completion of a voluntary action to remediate a contaminated site and for the return of such sites to productive use, and to exempt persons through 2017 who have issued covenants not to sue under the Voluntary Action Program from certain fees and penalties for one year after the issuance of such a covenant.
- Current Status:** 3/2/2011 - House Ways and Means, (Fifth Hearing)
- All Bill Status:** 2/23/2011 - House Ways and Means, (Fourth Hearing)
 2/16/2011 - House Ways and Means, (Third Hearing)
 2/9/2011 - House Ways and Means, (Third Hearing)
 2/2/2011 - House Ways and Means, (Second Hearing)
 1/26/2011 - House Ways and Means, (First Hearing)
 1/11/2011 - Referred to Committee House Ways and Means
 1/11/2011 - Introduced
- HB17** **TAX CREDIT FOR HIRING UNEMPLOYED (BAKER N)** To authorize a \$2,400 income tax withholding credit for an employer that hires and employs a previously unemployed individual.
- Current Status:** 1/11/2011 - Referred to Committee House Ways and Means
- All Bill Status:** 1/11/2011 - Introduced
- HB18** **TAX CREDIT - EXPANDING BUSINESSES (BAKER N)** To authorize a nonrefundable tax credit for a business that increases payroll and expands into a vacant facility.
- Current Status:** 1/24/2012 - Senate Ways & Means & Economic Development, (First Hearing)
- All Bill Status:** 1/10/2012 - Referred to Committee Senate Ways & Means & Economic Development
 12/14/2011 - **PASSED BY HOUSE**; Vote 82-12
 12/14/2011 - Bills for Third Consideration
 12/6/2011 - **SUBSTITUTE BILL ACCEPTED & REPORTED OUT AS AMENDED**, House Ways and Means, (Sixth Hearing)
 2/23/2011 - House Ways and Means, (Fifth Hearing)
 2/16/2011 - House Ways and Means, (Fourth Hearing)
 2/9/2011 - House Ways and Means, (Third Hearing)
 2/2/2011 - House Ways and Means, (Second Hearing)
 1/26/2011 - House Ways and Means, (First Hearing)
 1/11/2011 - Referred to Committee House Ways and Means
 1/11/2011 - Introduced

Oppose

- HB50** **TYPE-II ANNEXATION** (SNITCHLER T) To require that a political subdivision owner be included in determining the number of owners needed to sign a petition for an expedited type-II annexation.
- Current Status:** 1/24/2012 - House Local Government, (Seventh Hearing)
- All Bill Status:** 12/6/2011 - House Local Government, (Sixth Hearing)
6/21/2011 - House Local Government, (Fifth Hearing)
6/14/2011 - **BILL AMENDED**, House Local Government, (Fifth Hearing)
5/24/2011 - **SUBSTITUTE BILL ACCEPTED**, House Local Government, (Fourth Hearing)
3/1/2011 - House Local Government, (Second Hearing)
2/22/2011 - House Local Government, (Second Hearing)
2/15/2011 - House Local Government, (First Hearing)
2/1/2011 - Referred to Committee House Local Government
1/26/2011 - Introduced

Monitoring

- HB134** **CAPITAL GAINS INVESTMENTS** (SCHURING K) To reduce the income tax rate on capital gains reinvested in Ohio-based investments.
- Current Status:** 6/1/2011 - House Ways and Means, (Fourth Hearing)
- All Bill Status:** 5/11/2011 - House Ways and Means, (Third Hearing)
3/30/2011 - House Ways and Means, (Third Hearing)
3/23/2011 - House Ways and Means, (Second Hearing)
3/16/2011 - House Ways and Means, (First Hearing)
3/2/2011 - Referred to Committee House Ways and Means
3/1/2011 - Introduced
- HB198** **PROPERTY TAX COMPLAINTS** (COLEY II W) To permit property tax complaints to be initiated only by the property owner.
- Current Status:** 5/12/2011 - House Financial Institutions, Housing and Urban Development, (Second Hearing)
- All Bill Status:** 5/4/2011 - House Financial Institutions, Housing and Urban Development, (First Hearing)
4/12/2011 - Referred to Committee House Financial Institutions, Housing and Urban Development
4/12/2011 - Introduced
- HB357** **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE - TAXING DISTRICT** (RAMOS D) To require JobsOhio and state agencies offering economic development assistance to obtain Controlling Board approval before providing assistance to a person who, at or near the time of receiving the assistance, relocates employment positions from one taxing district to another or eliminates positions at an existing location.
- Current Status:** 11/9/2011 - Referred to Committee House Finance and Appropriations
- All Bill Status:** 10/26/2011 - Introduced

- SB5** **COLLECTIVE BARGAINING REFORM** (JONES S) To make changes to Ohio's Collective Bargaining Law, which was first enacted in 1983.
- Current Status:** 11/8/2011 - Repealed by Voter Referendum

All Bill Status: 3/31/2011 - **SIGNED BY GOVERNOR**; Eff. 7/01/11
 3/31/2011 - Sent to Governor for Signature
 3/30/2011 - Consideration of House Amendments; Concurred 17-16
 3/30/2011 - **PASSED BY HOUSE**; Passed as amended; Vote 53-44
 3/30/2011 - Bills for Third Consideration
 3/29/2011 - **SUBSTITUTE BILL ACCEPTED & REPORTED OUT AS AMENDED**, House Commerce & Labor, (Seventh Hearing)
 3/17/2011 - House Commerce & Labor, (Sixth Hearing)
 3/16/2011 - House Commerce & Labor, (Fifth Hearing)
 3/14/2011 - House Commerce & Labor, (Fourth Hearing)
 3/10/2011 - House Commerce & Labor, (Third Hearing)
 3/9/2011 - House Commerce & Labor, (Second Hearing)
 3/8/2011 - Referred to Committee House Commerce & Labor
 3/8/2011 - House Commerce & Labor, (First Hearing)
 3/2/2011 - **PASSED BY SENATE**; Vote 17-16 Amended 19-14
 3/2/2011 - Bills for Third Consideration
 3/2/2011 - **REPORTED OUT AS AMENDED**, Senate Insurance, Commerce & Labor, (Sixth Hearing)
 3/1/2011 - Senate Insurance, Commerce & Labor, (Fifth Hearing)
 2/22/2011 - Senate Insurance, Commerce & Labor, (Fourth Hearing)
 2/17/2011 - **BILL AMENDED**, Senate Insurance, Commerce & Labor, (Third Hearing)
 2/15/2011 - Senate Insurance, Commerce & Labor, (Second Hearing)
 2/9/2011 - **SUBSTITUTE BILL ACCEPTED**, Senate Insurance, Commerce & Labor, (First Hearing)
 2/2/2011 - Referred to Committee Senate Insurance, Commerce & Labor
 2/1/2011 - Introduced

SB89 LABOR REQUIREMENTS (JORDAN K) To prohibit state agencies from requiring or prohibiting certain labor requirements as a condition of performing public works and prohibit the appropriations of state funds for public works when political subdivisions require or prohibit certain labor.

Current Status: 3/8/2011 - Referred to Committee Senate Joint Committee on Agency Rule Review

All Bill Status: 2/23/2011 - Introduced

SB115 PROPERTY SALE GAINS (KEARNEY E) To exempt from income taxation any gains from the sale of Ohio property used in a trade or business and held for at least two years.

Current Status: 3/24/2011 - Senate Ways & Means & Economic Development, (First Hearing)

All Bill Status: 3/15/2011 - Referred to Committee Senate Ways & Means & Economic Development
 3/9/2011 - Introduced

Bills Introduced Since 1/16/2012

HB416 PUBLIC POOLS-SPAS-SPECIAL USE POOLS (BLAIR T) Regarding public pools, spas,

and special use pools.

- HB417** **PATIENT NOTIFICATION-TERMINATED PHYSICIANS** (GROSSMAN C) Regarding responsibility for notifying patients that a physician's employment by a health care entity has been terminated.
- HB418** **FRACKING MORATORIUM** (HAGAN R) To establish a moratorium until January 1, 2015, on the disposal by injection into an underground formation of brine and other waste substances associated with the exploration or development of oil and gas resources.
- HB419** **COMPASSIONATE ASSISTANCE FOR RAPE EMERGENCIES ACT** (ANTONIO N, GARLAND N) To establish the Compassionate Assistance for Rape Emergencies Act regarding hospital services provided to victims of sexual assault.
- HCR31** **VILLAGE OF ZOAR** (LANDIS A, OKEY M) To urge the United States Army Corps of Engineers to take all actions necessary to preserve the Village of Zoar in its present location in Tuscarawas County by repairing a levee that is protecting the Village.
- HCR32** **PREGNANCY RESOURCE CENTERS** (HAYES B, HENNE M) To recognize the contributions of pregnancy resource centers.
- SB282** **HIGHWAY NAME DESIGNATION** (BALDERSON T) To designate State Route 78 in Athens County only as the "78th Ohio Veteran Volunteer Infantry Highway."
- SB283** **COMPASSIONATE ASSISTANCE FOR RAPE EMERGENCIES ACT** (TURNER N) To establish the Compassionate Assistance for Rape Emergencies Act regarding hospital services provided to victims of sexual assault.
- SB284** **SPECIAL ELECTIONS** (JORDAN K) To eliminate the ability to conduct special elections in February and August.
- SCR24** **U.S. CONSTITUTION-FEDERALISM** (OBHOF L, FABER K) To reassert the principles of federalism found throughout the Constitution of the United States of America and embodied in the Tenth Amendment, to notify Congress to limit and end certain mandates, and to insist that federal legislation contravening the Tenth Amendment be prohibited or repealed.

Week in Review

Friday, January 20, 2012

ABORTION

Healthy Families Ohio, a coalition opposed to the "personhood" amendment anti-abortion activists want to put on the ballot, sued in the Ohio Supreme Court, asking justices to force the Ohio Ballot Board to split the amendment into two separate ballot issues. The group also argues the petition summary prepared by Personhood Ohio is not "fair and truthful," as required by law.

Ohio ProLife Action disclosed that stuffed bears it delivered to Senate offices during its advocacy for passage of the anti-abortion "heartbeat bill," HB125, cost \$33.33, following reports that most senators returned the bears because they exceeded the \$25 threshold for gifts that must be reported on disclosure forms.

Senate President Tom Niehaus (R-New Richmond) said hearings will resume on the anti-abortion "heartbeat" bill, HB125, after the state's March 6 primary. He characterized disagreements among the pro-life groups over the bill as a "family fight" on a "very important" issue that the parties need to settle.

AGRICULTURE

House and Senate Republicans announced the introduction of legislation to increase the amount of financing the state treasurer's office can support for farmers through the Agricultural Linked-Deposit Program, proposing an annual funding increase from \$125 million to \$165 million, and a per-farm loan limit of \$150,000, up from \$100,000.

The Ohio Farm Service Agency (FSA) has scheduled public meetings in Syracuse, Somerset, Brookville, Springfield and Carrollton to take comment on the proposed closing of five FSA offices by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. They begin Tuesday, Jan. 24.

AUDITOR OF STATE

Advocates for programs for the state's poorest citizens joined Auditor of State Dave Yost Tuesday as he unveiled his office's review of reissued Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) cards used in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) -- formerly known as the food stamp program. Both Ohio Association of Second Harvest Foodbanks Executive Director Lisa Hamler-Fugitt and Coalition on Homelessness and Housing in Ohio Executive Director Bill Faith said that it is very important for the program to be maintained with the "highest level of integrity," following Yost's finding that nearly 340,000 food stamp EBT cards had been reissued in 2011 out of a caseload of approximately 1.7 million Ohioans. Yost also said that, since 2006 when the state first moved to using EBT cards for the program, 17,008 individuals had received 10 or more reissued cards.

FY12-13 BUDGET

Gov. John Kasich said the mid-biennium budget review follow-up bill will debut "soon" but declined to be more specific than that. He said members of his administration met over the weekend to pare down a list of about 250 possible topics for inclusion in the bill. Chancellor Jim Petro has said legislative language related to "enterprise universities" could be in the bill, and Office of Health Transformation Director Greg Moody said this week his agency is seeking a simplification and streamlining of eligibility procedures for health and human services in the bill.

CORRECTIONS

The HB86 (Blessing-Heard) overhaul proposed by the Ohio Criminal Sentencing Commission's Corrections Bill Work Group would purge language barring inmates convicted of sex crimes against a minor from possessing photographs of children. A second provision of the sub bill that barred law enforcement from issuing tickets based on an "unaided visual estimation" of speed is also destined for the ax.

DEATH PENALTY

Wednesday's planned execution of Charles Lorraine was delayed while the state fought a U.S. District Court ruling that sharply criticized Ohio's failure to follow its own protocols for carrying out the death penalty. Gov. John Kasich and Attorney General Mike DeWine decided over the weekend to take the case to the U.S. Supreme Court, after the U.S. Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals refused to reinstate the execution.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The Ohio Department of Development has added two new films to its 2012 shooting schedule, awarding more than \$1.5 million in Motion Picture Tax Credits to "A Doll's House" by ADH Productions LLC, which will receive an estimated state tax credit of \$800,000 and which will be shot in Cincinnati; and to "Scorned" by Scorned Productions LLC, which will receive an estimated tax credit of \$727,108 and which will be shot in the Shawnee State Forest.

ECONOMY

The Ohio Society of CPAs released the results of a multi-state business outlook poll Monday, finding Ohio's accountants are slightly more optimistic about business growth in the state in 2012 than those in other states.

EDUCATION

Kasich education "czar" Roberts Sommers is leaving the administration at the end of January to start a consulting firm, Student Minded Schools.

A \$1.4 million judgment against a former charter school board treasurer ends a five-year effort by the state of Ohio to show that a community school officer is a public official and therefore liable for public funds, whether or not they are employed directly by the school or the private management that operates the charter. Attorney General Mike DeWine announced the decision follows a ruling by the Ohio Supreme Court in December 2010 that found community school officers are indeed public officials.

Ohio Department of Education (ODE) staff updated State Board of Education members on changes to the legislative platform for federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act reauthorization that had been approved in draft form in December. The changes ODE Director of Federal Relations Jeremy Marks said include giving states more flexibility in testing students with special learning and language needs; converse flexibility in testing "high-achieving students"; and use of teacher salaries and teacher seniority to ensure the fair distribution of effective teachers. Meanwhile, board member C. Todd Jones said Ohio's decision to seek a waiver from current No Child Left Behind mandates makes it complicit in the Obama administration's subversion of Congress' legislative powers.

ELECTIONS 2012

Responding to the persistent speculation that he'll be the GOP vice presidential nominee, U.S. Sen. Rob Portman (R-OH) said Monday he'd rather stay in the Senate. "I'm happy where I am. It's a great opportunity to serve. I've only been in office for a year now, and I'm enjoying the opportunity," he said during a Martin Luther King Jr. day breakfast in Columbus. "I think I'm in the right place to help our state and our country right now, and that's where I intend to stay."

The Columbus Dispatch reported that former House Minority Leader Joyce Beatty will leave her job as a senior vice president at Ohio State University while she campaigns for the 3rd Congressional District, and does not expect to return to the job if she fails to win either the nomination or race.

With Ohio's primary six weeks out, former Massachusetts Gov. Mitt Romney now holds a "comfortable but not overwhelming" lead among Ohio Republicans in the race for the state's presidential delegates, the Quinnipiac Poll released Wednesday shows. Newt Gingrich held the lead in Quinnipiac's last Ohio survey in December with 36 percent of the vote to Romney's then 18 percent. Now the poll shows Romney with 27 percent, Santorum, 18 percent, and Gingrich, 17 percent. Rounding out the Republican field, Texas U.S. Rep. Ron Paul has 10 percent and Texas Gov. Rick Perry, 4 percent.

Secretary of State Jon Husted Wednesday ordered that Democrat William O'Neill be placed on the March 6 primary ballot for the Ohio Supreme Court seat currently held by Justice Robert Cupp. Previously, Hamilton County Court Judge Fanon R. Rucker had been the only Democratic candidate on the ballot for the nomination. Husted had ruled earlier that O'Neill had fallen seven signatures short of qualifying for the ballot but this week sided with O'Neill's claim that seven signatures had been improperly invalidated.

The Ohio Democratic Party's Executive Committee endorsed Sherrod Brown, U.S. Senate; Yvette McGee Brown, associate justice of the Ohio Supreme Court; Fanon Rucker, associate justice of the Ohio Supreme Court; Robert Price, associate justice of the Ohio Supreme Court; and all Democratic incumbent members of the Ohio House and Senate seeking reelection.

The latest Quinnipiac Poll found that in the U.S. Senate race, Ohio voters are backing U.S. Sen. Sherrod Brown (D-OH) for re-election, with 47 percent in his favor, compared to 32 percent who are supporting Republican Josh Mandel. In an October survey, Brown led 49 percent to 34 percent. About two-thirds of voters said they haven't heard enough to form an opinion on Mandel.

ENERGY

Advanced Energy Economy (AEE) Ohio responded in a report to what it called the renewable energy myths that opponents to market-based solutions such as renewable portfolio standards (RPS) often bring

up, and provided its analysis of the market realities. The report specifically cited Beacon Hill Institute's (BHI) report opposing alternative and renewable energy standards under 127-SB221 (Schuler), Ohio's energy policy. According to the AEE report, "Renewable Energy: Myths vs. Market Reality," Ohioans will pay little, if anything, more for electricity in 2025 as a result of Ohio's RPS.

The Ohio Reformatory for Women at Marysville in Union County will receive funding for installation of new energy efficiency and conservation systems from the Ohio Air Quality Development Authority (OAQDA). At its January meeting, OAQDA authorized issuance of up to \$5,098,066 in Air Quality Development Revenue bonds to finance the project.

ENVIRONMENT

The Ohio EPA is seeking comments on a draft report on the Paint Creek Watershed, which covers 1,142 square miles in south Central Ohio, which found that the lower portion of Paint Creek has exceptional biological quality, although nearly half of the 117-mile-long river's mainstem is only partially meeting goals for aquatic life, and only 40 percent met recreation use goals due to bacterial impairment. The watershed includes tributaries in parts of Fayette, Highland, Ross, Clark, Clinton, Madison, Pike, Pickaway and Greene counties.

Ohio EPA will hold a public hearing on Tuesday, Jan. 31, to accept comments about a draft alternative general permit renewal for storm water discharges associated with construction activities in the Big Darby Creek watershed, which is among the most biologically diverse stream systems of its size in the Midwest and home to several endangered species.

GAMING

The Ohio Casino Control Commission certified Gaming Laboratories International (GLI) of New Jersey as the state's first independent lab to test slot machines and other gaming devices at the four casinos. In addition, the commission voted to give Chairwoman Jo Ann Davidson the authority to certify two more in the coming days as the commission's staff finalizes work on the applications of BMM International of Las Vegas and Eclipse of Solon.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY/STATEHOUSE

House Speaker Bill Batchelder (R-Medina) and his GOP caucus laid out four top priorities they'll address in the coming months as well as a host of other issues that will draw their attention in 2012. The big four are a streamlining of workforce development programs to foster economic growth, driven by the recommendations of a study committee that met in 2011; JobsOhio II legislation that will follow up on last year's HB1 (Duffey) and establish a new Development Services Agency; Bureau of Workers' Compensation reforms aimed at cutting bureaucracy and improving the care and rehabilitation of workers; and the launching of another review process for K-12 education reform, one expected to stretch into 2013.

During the House GOP's 2012 priority-setting press conference, House Speaker Bill Batchelder (R-Medina) said his caucus is only interested in revisiting the less-controversial aspects of the voter-repudiated SB5 (Jones) if local government and labor leaders come forward to urge their adoption.

The Ohio House GOP Caucus decided to delay permanently filling vacancies in Districts 87 and 98 until after the March primary because multiple candidates have filed to run in those districts. However, Speaker William Batchelder (R-Medina) said they are exploring the possibility of temporary appointments to the seats so the districts "have a voice" in the period before the primary.

The Capitol Square Review and Advisory Board identified its capital budget priorities for FY13-14, including replacing the Statehouse security system. In addition, the board re-elected former Sen. Richard Finan as chairman and former Sen. Neal Zimmers as secretary, and elected Niehaus as vice chairman. The board also approved Charles Moses as the ex-officio member representing the Capitol Square Foundation.

GOVERNOR

Gov. John Kasich announced that he will deliver his "State of the State" address far from the Statehouse, scheduling the Tuesday, Feb. 7 speech for Steubenville City Schools' Wells Academy, the best-rated public elementary school in the state.

HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

A new "transdisciplinary" group of health care professionals has launched a nonprofit advocacy organization, the Council of Ohio Health Care Advocacy (COHCA). The group is committed "to continuous improvement of the quality of patient care, by providing education, legislative policy advocacy, information and professional development to its members."

Ohio health officials said Wednesday they're committing \$1 million to help train medical practices to convert to the patient-centered medical home model. Resources will help spur a training and education process that was set out in 128-HB198 (Lehner) but wasn't fully funded at the time. Greg Moody, director of the Office of Health Transformation (OHT), said the \$1 million will come from an \$8 million federal bonus payment the state received through the Children's Health Insurance Program. The state biennial budget allocated that \$8 million to then-unspecified OHT initiatives.

State Reps. Nickie J. Antonio (D-Lakewood) and Nancy Garland (D-New Albany) along with Sen. Nina Turner (D-Cleveland) announced that they are introducing companion bills in the House and Senate to ensure hospitals provide sexual assault survivors with medically and factually accurate and unbiased information. The Compassionate Assistance for Rape Emergencies Act would require all hospital emergency rooms to provide survivors of sexual assault with treatment that can prevent pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections, if the survivor wishes to use them, regardless of the beliefs of the institution.

HIGHER EDUCATION

The University of Toledo is seeking public comments about the institution in preparation for its comprehensive evaluation visit Feb. 27-29 by a site team representing the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools. UT has been accredited by the commission since 1922. The former Medical College of Ohio/Medical University of Ohio has been accredited since 1980.

Ohio Board of Regents Chancellor Jim Petro and wife Nancy Petro, co-authors of "False Justice - Eight Myths That Convict the Innocent," will speak at the University of Toledo (UT) College of Law's Distinguished Speaker Series. The Petros will discuss the book and their work to outline a pattern of myths and misconceptions they say permeates American beliefs about the legal system.

Ohio State University alumnus and entertainment industry leader Lawrence Barnett has committed \$6 million to the university to improve arts facilities and education at the school. The gift to the university's College of Arts and Sciences will establish the multi-disciplinary Lawrence and Isabel Barnett Center for Integrated Arts and Enterprise, and also support renovations to Sullivant Hall, which is set to reopen next year.

INSURANCE

Ohio's average homeowners insurance premiums are the sixth lowest in the nation, and its automotive insurance premiums are 11th lowest, according to the latest trend report from the Ohio Insurance Institute (OII). OII said the new data is based on Ohio Department of Insurance data released last year for 2010 rates, and National Association of Insurance Commissioners data for 2009 and 2008.

JUDICIAL

Gov. John Kasich appointed two common pleas judges, naming Amy Corrigall Jones to Summit County's General Division bench and Christopher Tenoglia to Meigs County's General and Domestic Relations Division bench.

The Ohio Supreme Court announced that two rule packages governing traffic violation bureaus and a newly reconstituted dispute resolution commission are due to become effective Feb. 1.

The Supreme Court of Ohio ruled Tuesday that a warrantless search of abandoned property does not violate the owner's constitutional right against unreasonable search and seizure because the owner has forfeited any claim to privacy in abandoning the property. The Court said instead that a reasonable expectation of privacy requires a person to demonstrate a "subjective expectation of privacy that, viewed objectively, is reasonable under the circumstances," Justice Terrence O'Donnell stated, writing for a unanimous Court.

LIBRARIES

The State Library of Ohio announced Friday that three projects in the state have been selected as Exemplary Programs for the Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) 2011 Program Report to the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS). The State Library of Ohio staff selected the Legacy Library, Marietta College for its digitization project; the Mary L. Cook Public Library for a Choose to Read Ohio project; and the Public Library of Cincinnati and Hamilton County for the preservation and virtual access to the 1848 Panorama of Cincinnati daguerreotype.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Cleveland State University (CSU) issued a study last week suggesting that consolidating public safety dispatches is one way for communities to save money while improving services. The study was coordinated with the city of Wooster, the city of Ashland, and Wayne County, and was conducted by CSU's Maxine Goodman Levin College of Urban Affairs. It found that consolidating the dispatch services for the three entities could collectively save an estimated \$331,000 per year. The study also found that combining the separate services into one entity serving Ashland, Wooster and Wayne County, would be legally implementable and financially viable at less than or equal to existing costs, and could provide service that is equal to or better than current service.

NATURAL RESOURCES

The Ohio Environmental Council testified to Youngstown City Council and took to the airwaves to urge caution on deep-shale oil and gas drilling and to dispute the industry message that earthquakes triggered at a Youngstown area disposal well for brine from hydraulic fracturing were an isolated incident.

PENSION FUNDS

Four of Ohio's retirement systems should follow the Police & Fire Pension Fund's lead and consider new policies to accelerate divestment from companies doing business in Iran and Sudan, Sen. Keith Faber (R-Celina), chairman of the Ohio Retirement Study Council (ORSC), said Wednesday. He issued that call based on urgings from Joyce Garver Keller, executive director of Ohio Jewish Communities. She said that, after an initial push in 2007 by the systems to divest at least half those holdings, further progress on divestment had been slow.

A total of 14 people submitted resumes by the deadline for ORSC executive director. A search subcommittee led by Sen. Scott Oelslager (R-Canton) is scheduled to meet Monday and discuss the applications in executive session. Staff attorney Anne Erkman is serving as interim director following the year-end retirement of Aristotle Hutras, but she is not seeking the permanent position.

PEOPLE

The State Library of Ohio said it is promoting David Namiotka to associate state librarian for library services.

James Shea has joined the Capitol Square Review and Advisory Board (CSRAB) senior staff as the deputy director for buildings and grounds. Shea succeeds Dave Wycuff, who is retiring Feb. 29 after serving the state of Ohio for 30 years.

The Ohio Supreme Court has rejected the request of former Ohio State University running back Maurice Clarett's erstwhile attorney, Percy Squire, that the Court reconsider its decision to indefinitely suspend his law license.

POLLS/STUDIES

A new Quinnipiac University Poll released Thursday found Ohio voters split on two of the most controversial issues before the General Assembly -- abortion and fracking. Respondents were evenly divided on HB125 (Wachtmann), the so-called "Heartbeat Bill," which bans abortions once a fetal heartbeat can be detected, with 45 percent supporting and 46 percent opposing the bill. On drilling for oil and natural gas, as well as hydraulic fracturing, also known as fracking, nearly two-thirds of voters (64 percent) said that the economic benefits of drilling outweigh environmental concerns, compared to 29 percent who disagreed. But 72 percent said they want a moratorium on fracking until there are further studies on its impact, with support for a shutdown strong among all groups.

In other findings in the Quinnipiac Poll:

- Gov. John Kasich has a 39 percent job approval rating, with 48 percent disapproving of his performance. The number is similar to the 38 percent approval to 50 percent disapproval in October.
- Ohio voters want a ban on private ownership of exotic animals by a margin of 68 percent to 28 percent.
- Thirty-nine percent of voters approve of U.S. Sen. Rob Portman's (R-OH) job performance, while 25 percent disapprove.
- Thirty-two percent approve of the General Assembly's job performance, while 49 percent disapprove. The numbers have been similar in the previous four surveys.
- Fifty-eight percent are somewhat or very dissatisfied with the direction of the state, a drop from the 71 percent in October. Those somewhat satisfied with the state's direction went from 26 percent in October to 37 percent in this survey.

STATE GOVERNMENT

Ohio political leaders addressed a large gathering in Columbus for the annual Martin Luther King Jr. birthday breakfast, with U.S. Sen. Sherrod Brown (D-OH) saying King "would recognize that we are in troubling times" because of GOP initiatives that he said are contrary to King's legacy of fighting for voting rights and labor rights.

Ohioans continued to fuel the trend of increasing liquor sales with another record-setting year, as the Ohio Department of Commerce reported a 5.3 percent bump in dollar sales and a 3.9 percent increase in gallonage. Sales reached \$793.7 million in 2011, about \$40 million more than in 2010. The department's Division of Liquor Control reported a total of 11.4 million gallons sold across 457 contract liquor agents in 2011, compared to about 11 million gallons in 2010.

TAXATION

Economists Richard Vedder of Ohio University and Ned Hill of Cleveland State University, neither of whom is a fan of tax expenditures for any number of reasons, including the fact that they distort the market and are costly to administer, suggested steps the Senate Ways and Means and Economic Development Committee could take to deal with Ohio's tax expenditures, including applying sunset dates and requiring review.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS/INTERNET

On Wednesday, four Ohio telecommunications industry leaders --Charles Moses, president of the Ohio Telecom Association (OTA); Tom Pelto, president, and John Kelley of AT&T Ohio; and Vickie Norris, director for state regulatory and legislative affairs for CenturyLink -- testified in support of Sen. Frank LaRose's (R-Fairlawn) SB271 before the Senate Energy and Public Utilities Committee. It would remove carrier of last resort (COLR) and service quality obligations for Ohio's incumbent local exchange companies (ILECs) in areas that have been deemed "fully competitive" by the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio (PUCO).

TOBACCO

Ohio fared poorly in the American Lung Association's State of Tobacco Control 2012 report released Thursday. The state received two "F" grades for tobacco-prevention and control spending and tobacco-cessation coverage and a "D" for the cigarette tax category. Ohio received one good score -- an "A" for smoke-free air. The ALA's annual report card about tobacco control monitors progress on tobacco control policies at the state and national levels.

TRANSPORTATION

The group Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety gave Ohio the lowest ranking on its green-yellow-red stoplight report card for traffic safety laws, dinging the state for lack of such driving rules as primary seat belt enforcement, a texting-while-driving ban and ignition interlock devices for those convicted of drunken driving.

Transportation Director Jerry Wray showed the Transportation Review and Advisory Council what he called a "realistic" view of major new transportation projects the state can afford in the next 20 years. ODOT staff said Ohio only has about \$100 million per year to fund the \$2 billion worth of Tier I projects, meaning a likely multi-year delay for some big projects, like the third phase of the I-70/I-70 interchange in Columbus.

The Ohio Rail Development Commission (ORDC) is nearing the completion of a long-term lease for the state-owned Panhandle rail line and could vote on that lease as early as March, Commissioner Thomas McOwen said Thursday.

TREASURER OF STATE

Treasurer Josh Mandel released a follow-up Tuesday to his July report on a "top-bottom review" he launched upon taking office extending the review to encompass all of 2011. The earlier review helped Mandel's office return a \$400,000 surplus to the state at the end of FY11 and reduce General Operating Fund expenses by \$1.2 million for the current biennium.

UNIONS

The Service Employees International Union District 1199, which represents about 4,000 state workers, said it reached a tentative contract agreement similar to the one the state negotiated with the larger Ohio Civil Service Employees Association. The agreement would largely extend the current contract, minus 10 unpaid furlough days.

UTILITIES

The Office of Ohio Consumers' Counsel Governing Board voted to grant interviews to six of eight remaining applicants to fill the position of consumers' counsel, including Interim Consumers' Counsel Bruce Weston and Rep. Mike Foley (D-Cleveland). The board expects to conduct interviews and pick a finalist at its March 20 meeting.

WORKERS' COMPENSATION

The Ohio Bureau of Workers' Compensation said three more people have been convicted or pleaded guilty as a result of the bureau's fraud investigations.

Ohio Bureau of Workers' Compensation (BWC) Administrator/CEO Stephen Buehrer announced the appointment of Christopher Carlson as chief actuarial officer. In this new role, Carlson will be responsible for directing the activities of BWC's actuarial division, setting employer premium rates to cover the cost of care for Ohioans injured on the job.