

NAIOP

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:* 9/27/2011 - House Ways and Means, (First Hearing)
All Bill Status: 1/11/2011 - Referred to Committee House Ways and Means
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:* 9/27/2011 - House Ways and Means, (Sixth Hearing)
All Bill Status: 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: 6/21/2011 - House Local Government, (Fifth Hearing)
All Bill Status: 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
- 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 9/19/2011

- HB326** **USE OF PUBLIC FUNDS** (MCCLAIN J, HILL B) To prohibit a person from using public funds for specified purposes and to specify that a person or a political subdivision who violates the prohibition is guilty of a first degree misdemeanor.
- HB327** **JOB CREATION-RETENTION TAX CREDIT** (GONZALES A) To provide for a six-year trial period in which taxpayers may receive a job creation or job retention tax credit for the employment of home-based employees and to require the Director of Development to issue a report at the end of the six-year period.
- HB328** **CONCEALED CARRY** (UECKER J) To modify the journalist exception to the provision that makes concealed handgun license records confidential.
- HB329** **TELECOMMUNICATIONS FRAUD** (MCGREGOR R) To allow the Attorney General to investigate the offenses of unauthorized use of property and telecommunications fraud, to modify the penalties for telecommunications fraud, and to create the offense of telecommunications fraud perpetrated against an elderly person or disabled adult.
- HB330** **DYSLEXIA AWARENESS MONTH** (BRENNER A, CELESTE T) To designate October as "Dyslexia Awareness Month."
- HB331** **CYBERSECURITY EDUCATION AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL** (DOVILLA M, BUBP D) To create the Cybersecurity, Education, and Economic Development Council.
- HB332** **ACCESSIBLE HOME RENOVATION/CONSTRUCTION** (STINZIANO M) To authorize a nonrefundable income tax credit for the purchase or construction of an accessible home or for the renovation of a home to improve its accessibility.
- SB225** **CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT BOUNDARIES** (SAWYER T) To establish Congressional district boundaries for the state based on the 2010 decennial census of Ohio.
- SB226** **PUBLIC RECORDS ACT** (LAROSE F) To exempt from disclosure under the Public Records Act any videotape or other visual media taken by law enforcement personnel that shows the killing of a peace officer, except under certain circumstances.
- SB227** **ABSENTEE VOTING** (TAVARES C, TURNER N) To restore local control to Ohio's election process and increase voter participation by permitting an individual who wishes to vote by absent voter's ballots to request those ballots via electronic mail, through the internet, if internet delivery is offered by a board of elections or the Secretary of State, by permitting a board of elections to mail unsolicited applications for absent voter's ballots, and by requiring the General Assembly to appropriate funds, and requiring the Secretary of State to reimburse boards, for costs incurred in sending unsolicited applications for general elections held in an even-numbered year.
- SB228** **NURSE ANESTHETISTS** (BURKE D) To authorize certified registered nurse anesthetists to issue medication orders for the administration of drugs to patients during certain phases of patient care and to specify the circumstances to which such nurses may perform clinical support functions.
- SB229** **EDUCATIONAL CHOICE SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM** (SAWYER T) To require the Department of Education to conduct a performance review of each chartered nonpublic school participating in the Educational Choice Scholarship Program.
- SB230** **OFFICE OF REGIONAL SERVICES AND ACCOUNTABILITY** (SAWYER T) To create the Office of Regional Services and Accountability in the Department of Education.

Week in Review

Friday, September 23, 2011

ATTORNEY GENERAL

Ohio Attorney General Mike DeWine announced the start of the 2011 Take Action High School Video Contest, which gives Ohio high school students a chance to win scholarship prizes by submitting videos on Internet safety.

Ohio Attorney General (AG) Mike DeWine announced Friday that Ohio has joined six other states in support of the U.S. Department of Justice effort to oppose the proposed merger of AT&T and T-Mobile. Besides Ohio, those participating in the filing in a Washington D.C. federal court are California, Illinois, Massachusetts, New York, Pennsylvania and Washington.

BALLOT ISSUES

The Ohio Business Roundtable endorsed passage of State Issue 2, the referendum on SB5, the overhaul of the state's collective bargaining law.

CHILDREN

Based on the results of a successful Ohio Supreme Court and Ohio Department of Job and Family Services pilot project, the state's 2012-13 budget requires a plan for the statewide expansion of the Differential Response program for investigating reports of child abuse and neglect. It begins with a non-threatening, non-adversarial family assessment.

COMMUNICATIONS

U.S. Sen. Sherrod Brown (D-OH) and four colleagues wrote a letter to the chairman of the Federal Communications Commission urging it to enforce a new law to prevent broadcast of television commercials that are significantly louder than normal programming airing around them.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Eight of Ohio's energy focused business organizations launched a new statewide network, Advanced Energy Economy Ohio (AEE Ohio), seeking to drive the development of advanced energy to boost the state's economy and competitiveness nationally. One of the first regional energy organizations, the new organization is comprised of CincyTech, Dayton Development Coalition, Edison Welding Institute(EWI), Nortech, Ohio Business Council for a Clean Economy, Rocket Ventures, TechColumbus, and TechGROWTH.

EDUCATION

Ohio continues to outpace the nation for college placement results on the SAT, which unlike the ACT, is the only postsecondary admission test statistically aligned to the Nation's Report Card, according to the College Board. The Buckeye State saw a one-point increase in the average reading score for 2011, no change in the writing score, and a two-point decline in the math score, generally avoiding the downward trend in mean SAT scores nationally over the past six years.

Ohio narrowly missed a top-three finish for National Blue Ribbon Schools this year, state Superintendent Stan Heffner announced Monday, placing 12 public and six private schools in the coveted rankings. Texas led by a wide margin with 26 National Blue Ribbon Schools, followed by California in second place (21) and New York and Illinois in third (19 apiece). New Jersey followed Ohio's 18 Blue Ribbon Schools with 14, taking fifth place. Minnesota has yet to certify adequate yearly progress (AYP) figures for public schools and did not participate in this year's competition.

Ohio and its Department of Education are among 20 states selected to lead an effort to improve science education for all students by helping with the development of Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) for kindergarten through high school.

The Ohio School Facilities Commission (OSFC) gave the go-head Thursday for the college-preparatory boarding school program authorized by budget bill HB153 (Amstutz), and approved seven school districts for energy conservation funding.

The aggressive timeline for a performance and fiscal audit of state public broadcasting facilities hit a snag this week when the eTech Ohio committee that is weighing the future of central master control announced it had received no response to a request for proposal (RFP) issued less than two weeks ago. Instead, staff has been assigned to identify possible vendors to address three separate areas needing analysis/evaluation: financial assessment, a performance audit and a customer satisfaction survey.

ELECTIONS

Hearings started in the House Criminal Justice Committee on HB326, sponsored by Reps. Jeff McClain (R-Upper Sandusky) and Brian Hill (R-Zanesville), with Secretary of State Jon Husted saying it "adds teeth" to current law, which State Auditor Dave Yost said makes the improper use of public dollars "a compliance issue only." HB326 proposes making public officials personally accountable for the misuse of public dollars to fund campaigns by designating it a first-degree misdemeanor and adding a criminal penalty of up to 180 days in jail and a \$1,000 fine.

ELECTIONS 2012

Former U.S. Rep. Mary Jo Kilroy said Friday that she will run for the newly created Franklin County congressional district. Kilroy is the first to make her intentions known for the new 3rd Congressional District. The former congresswoman, who lost a bid for re-election against U.S. Rep. Steve Stivers (R-Upper Arlington) in 2010, made her announcement on Facebook and a post on the website *The Huffington Post*.

David Lewis, a self-described pro-life/Tea Party activist, made an official announcement on Monday that he will challenge U.S. House Speaker John Boehner (R-West Chester) in a 2012 primary. He said in a statement that he lost faith in Boehner after the congressman did not defund Planned Parenthood or the Affordable Care Act signed by President Barack Obama.

EMINENT DOMAIN

The Ohio Supreme Court will hear an eminent domain dispute involving the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR). Eighty-one property owners near the Grand Lake St. Marys claim ODNR has effectively annexed their land in a de facto property taking by replacing an old spillway with a larger one linked to repeated flooding. As part of its ruling, the Court must decide whether the four-year statute of limitations on eminent domain takings began with the construction of the new spillway in 1997, or with each overflow of the lake that results in downstream flooding.

EMPLOYMENT/UNEMPLOYMENT

Unemployment continues to inch up in Ohio, as the state's unemployment went up to 9.1 percent in August, a slight increase from July's 9 percent rate. According to the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS), the state lost about 700 jobs over the month, while the number of unemployed workers rose by about 7,000, going from 529,000 in July to 536,000 in August. Still, the unemployment rate is lower than a year ago, when it was 9.9 percent. Friday's announcement put Ohio's unemployment rate in a tie with the national unemployment rate after several months of trending below the national level.

U.S. Sen. Sherrod Brown (D-OH) visited the Central Ohio Workforce Investment Corporation (COWIC) in Franklin County to advocate for federal legislation that bans jobs sites, businesses and employment agencies from using advertisements for jobs that say unemployed workers need not apply. Brown is a co-sponsor of Fair Employment Opportunity Act of 2011, legislation introduced by U.S. Sen. Richard Blumenthal (D-CT). Brown said the legislation doesn't tell employers who they should hire, but will give those unemployed more opportunities.

ENERGY

Licking County will retrofit 12 county government buildings with various energy efficiency and conservation systems following authorization of \$4.7 million in financing by the Ohio Air Quality Development Authority (OAQDA) at its September meeting. The work will be divided into two projects, to be completed by Johnson Controls and Energy Systems Group, respectively.

The Energy and Economic Summit hosted by the governor and Battelle Memorial Institute was held Wednesday and Thursday this week on the campus of Ohio State University. Opening the meeting, Gov. John Kasich told the attendees he was looking for a creative solution to propel Ohio as an energy technology leader and producer as the state seeks to develop a comprehensive, balanced energy policy. Throughout the two days, the Utica shale resources were highlighted as the "game changer" for Ohio by executives in all traditional energy sectors.

Ohio Consumers' Counsel (OCC) Janine Migden-Ostrander resigned Wednesday, saying she is leaving effective Oct. 15 "because the current environment makes it impossible for me to serve the only way I know how -- as an advocate focused on achieving results for the public." Her resignation comes in the wake of budget cuts that took her budget from \$8.5 million in FY11 to \$5.6 million in FY12, with another \$1.5 million cut due to kick in for FY13.

Bruce Weston, the deputy consumers' counsel and legal director, was named interim consumers' counsel while the OCC Governing Board searches for a permanent replacement.

In other OCC action, Attorney General Mike DeWine reappointed one Michael Watkins to the OCC Board of Governors and appointed Sally Hughes and Fred Yoder to the board.

FEDERAL

Ohio's two U.S. senators, Sherrod Brown (D) and Rob Portman (R), are urging the Obama administration to go to the World Trade Organization (WTO) to address China's hoarding of rare earth materials. In a letter to U.S. Trade Representative Ron Kirk, the senators said restrictions placed on the export of rare earth materials by China, which supplies about 97 percent of the materials, are making it difficult for Ohio and U.S. businesses to compete.

GAMING

After a nationwide search, Matt Schuler, chief of staff for Ohio's Senate Republican Caucus, has been named executive director of the Casino Control Commission.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY/STATEHOUSE

The Senate Ways and Means Committee this fall will pick up some of the upper chamber's unfinished business from budget season with plans to review Ohio's array of tax expenditures to see whether all of them still deserve a spot in Ohio's tax code. Such a review was urged by the Buckeye Institute, Greater Ohio and the Center for Community Solutions but the final version of the budget removed the special committee in lieu of letting standing House and Senate committees do the work.

In the wake of Senate GOP Caucus Chief of Staff Matt Schuler's move to the Casino Control Commission, Liz Connolly, the deputy chief of staff, will take over as interim during the search for a permanent replacement.

The Senate GOP formally elected Sen. Tom Patton (R-Strongsville) majority floor leader, while Sen. Tim Grendell (R-Chesterland) formally resigned his Senate seat and was sworn in as a judge on the Geauga County Court of Common Pleas.

Despite a large turnout of supporters of the so-called "heartbeat" bill, HB125 (Wachtmann), Senate President Tom Niehaus said he's not decided what to do with the bill.

The House passed several bills this week, including HB212 (Grossman), which extends to legal custodians the exemption from certain adoptive placement requirements; HB285-Roegner), which designates September as "Mesothelioma Month" and November as "National Lung Cancer Awareness Month"; and HB97 (Hollington), which requires the state to make health savings accounts available to state employees

Bills headed to the governor after action in one or both chambers include HB319 (Huffman), redistricting; HB218 (Hottinger), addressing acceptable off-label drug use; and SB101 (Patton), designating May as "Substance Abuse Awareness and Education Month."

Consul General of Canada Roy Norton addressed the House, discussing U.S.-Ohio-Canada relations and touting the value of trade between the two nations and Ohio in particular. He said trade with Canada accounts for 300,000 jobs in the state. Two items of concern to his country are legislative provisions that discriminate against goods or services coming from another country and the construction of a new Lake Erie bridge between the two nations.

The Legislature's attempt to prevent a Casey Anthony-style verdict in Ohio met with broad reservations Wednesday from Republicans and Democrats on the House Criminal Justice Committee, which took up HB301 (Hottinger-Beck) to modernize the state's child endangerment laws.

Bills reported out of committees included HB108 (Gerberry-R. Hagan), which deals with care of companion animals; HB136 (Huffman), which replaces the Educational Choice and Cleveland scholarship program with the Parental Choice and Taxpayer Savings Scholarship Program; HB267 (McKenney), which addresses nonprofit corporation law; and SB124 (Bacon), which makes changes to the probate code.

The bi-partisan House Tax Structure Study Committee convened Thursday with Chairman John Adams (R-Sidney) stressing that the committee would entertain testimony regarding only three aspects of taxation in Ohio: the Commercial Activity Tax (CAT), sales tax and tax expenditures.

HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

Lt. Gov. and Department of Insurance Director Mary Taylor Tuesday released findings of a report prepared by Milliman Inc. designed to analyze the effects of federal health care reform -- the Affordable Care Act (ACA) -- on Ohio's consumers, businesses and insurance market starting in 2014, which is when most of the law's provisions go into effect, saying, "The report shows significant changes that will increase premiums while dramatically expanding government programs."

However, Cathy Levine and Col Owens of Ohio Consumers for Health Coverage charged Taylor with "using the report for political posturing. The report's purpose is not to call into question the Affordable Care Act but rather to drive implementation of Ohio's [health benefit] exchange in a way that helps the uninsured get health coverage while reining in costs for those who are already covered."

HIGHER EDUCATION

The Shannon Rodgers and Jerry Silverman School of Fashion Design and Merchandising, which is ranked as the third best fashion school in the U.S. and 13th in the world, became the state's newest Center of Excellence in Cultural and Societal Transformation.

Ohio University said that Dr. Jack Brose, dean of the Heritage College of Osteopathic Medicine and executive dean for health affairs, will retire at the end of the fiscal year as dean but then join the provost's office. Brose will become senior executive director for health services and special assistant to Provost and Executive Vice President Pam Benoit, where he will help develop a recently approved Columbus campus for the medical college. Brose became medical college dean in 2001.

Enrollment overall at Kent State University and within its main campus freshman class is the highest ever, the university said. Overall enrollment for the fall 2011 semester is up almost 2 percent to 42,185, and main-campus enrollment is up 4.2 percent. Enrollment in the freshman class adds up to 4,284 students,

surpassing the fall 2009 record of 4,030. Enrollment of minority, international and graduate students also increased this year.

The Cincinnati State Board of Trustees voted unanimously Wednesday to accept a fact-finder's report concerning collective bargaining issues with the union representing full-time faculty members. Representatives of the administration and the Cincinnati State chapter of the American Association of University Professors have been in contract negotiations since May 16, and presented 24 unresolved issues to independent fact-finder Felicia Bernardini on Aug. 29. The most recent contract, a three-year agreement, expired Sept. 5.

Bowling Green State University's Center for Regional Development (CRD) and project partner Ohio University have received \$800,000 in federal funding for a project to help businesses find and develop the workforce they need to succeed. CRD will create a searchable online database containing real-time information on what workers exist in specific locations and the skill sets they possess.

Cleveland State University (CSU) announced Thursday that faculty researcher Dr. Roman Kondratov has received a \$1.5 million grant from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to study the effects of circadian clocks on aging. The project will include possible ways to manipulate the body's internal timekeeping system in an effort to delay the aging process and significantly extend lifespan in "model organisms."

HOUSING

The Ohio Association of Realtors reported a 21.8 percent increase in sales for August compared to the same month in 2010, with a jump from 8,288 sales to 10,094.

JUDICIAL

The Ohio Supreme Court ordered Ohio State University to deliver to justices under seal the un-redacted copies of records the university denied to ESPN. The Court is weighing the sports network's lawsuit seeking release of the records, which deal with the memorabilia scandal that cost OSU football coach Jim Tressel his job.

NATURAL RESOURCES

The Ohio Oil and Gas Energy Education Program (OOGEEP) released its second "Economic Impact Study" on "Ohio's Natural Gas and Crude Oil Exploration and Production Industry and the Emerging Utica Gas Formation," focusing on five specific economic elements: jobs, personal income, royalties, tax revenues and gross state product (GSP) from 2011 until 2015. The study projects the Utica shale plays alone will add more than 200,000 Ohio-based jobs; an overall wage and personal-income boost of more than \$12 billion; an increase in royalty payments of as much as \$1.6 billion; total tax revenues (severance, commercial activity, property, federal, state and local) of approximately \$479 million; and a GSP of more than \$29 billion.

PENSION FUNDS

The Ohio Public Employees Retirement System (OPERS) criticized a recent report from the Buckeye Institute, a free-market Ohio think tank, which said the pension system has the 14th highest employer contribution rates for public employees among similar states' systems. The ranking is inaccurate, the pension system said in a posting on its blog, because it fails to note that Ohio is a non-Social Security state, meaning taxpayers are not liable for the 6.2 percent employer payroll tax private-sector businesses must pay.

PEOPLE

Connie Schultz, the Pulitzer Prize-winning *Cleveland Plain Dealer* columnist and wife of U.S. Sen. Sherrod Brown (D-OH), resigned from the newspaper Monday, citing the intersection of journalism and politics in

her life. Schultz wrote that she will continue to write columns for Creators Syndicate and Parade magazine, and is working on another book.

The Ohio Supreme Court announced the death of Coshocton County Juvenile/Probate Judge David Burns Friday in Terre Haute, IN. He was 68. Burns, elected in the November 2008 General Election to replace the retiring Judge C. Fenning Pierce, began his term Feb. 9, 2009.

Ohio Department of Development Director Christiane Schmenk announced Thursday that Kevin Potter is now serving as the assistant director of the department.

Steve Faulkner, former spokesman for Lt. Gov. Mary Taylor, is now press secretary for the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT).

David McCallister, the director of the Ohio Liquor Control Commission since May, was found dead at home on Tuesday, Sept. 20. He was 43. The funeral was Friday.

POLLS/STUDIES

Few children on Medicaid receiving treatment for depression finish the standard six-month course of antidepressants, and only about half complete the first three months of prescribed antidepressants, analysis by Ohio State University researchers found. The study, led by OSU social work and psychiatry professor Cynthia Fontanella, was based on a review of Medicaid prescription data over three years and is published in the current issue of *The Annals of Pharmacotherapy*. It found that adolescent and minority youths were at higher risk of not completing treatment.

REDISTRICTING/REAPPORTIONMENT

As with the House, the Senate wasted little time hearing and passing HB319 (Huffman), the bill redrawing Ohio congressional districts. The final version, also agreed to by the House this week, includes an appropriation of \$2.75 million in General Revenue Funds to inoculate it against a possible referendum and ostensibly to help county boards of elections to prepare for the new districts and deal with a certain March 6 primary -- a provision also added to HB319.

However, a March primary may not be that certain given comments by Speaker Bill Batchelder (R-Medina), who told reporters he prefers a May primary and said Senate President Tom Niehaus (R-New Richmond) does also. He went on to suggest they may be looking for a vehicle to attach an amendment to.

STATE GOVERNMENT

Fitch Ratings assigned an AA+ rating to \$300 million in state general obligation bonds expected to go to market soon and reaffirmed that same rating for \$7.5 billion in such bonds already issued. The ratings agency cited a stabilizing economy, moderate debt levels and conservative fiscal management as justifications for the AA+ rating.

TRANSPORTATION

Commercial business and local government fleet operators and managers attended the annual Ohio Green Fleets Awards and Technology Expo put on by Clean Fuels Ohio at COSI in Columbus on Monday, to share successes in diverting transportation and logistical operations from petroleum and on to alternative fuels. Twelve new fleets were certified into the Ohio Green Fleets program.

UTILITIES

For the 27th consecutive year, the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio (PUCO) ordered Ohio electric and natural gas utilities to reconnect or maintain service for customers who have been disconnected or are

facing disconnection. Last winter heating season, more than 431,000 Ohio utility customers utilized the PUCO's winter reconnect program.

In an effort to increase consumer awareness and encourage the purchase of Energy Star products, American Electric Power Ohio (AEP Ohio) is offering a \$10 to \$15 discount on select models of Energy Star Light Emitting Diode (LED) bulbs. The discount on LED bulbs is being offered through a pilot program available at nearly 60 retail outlets in Ohio. The pilot program is part of an overall initiative to reduce the price of selected Energy Star qualified products for AEP Ohio customers.

VIDEO LOTTERY TERMINALS (VLTs)

Intralot Inc., the Ohio Lottery Commission's current contractor to run its games, could be ready to install video lottery terminals (VLT) at racetracks in as little as four months if its contract is amended, according to a request the commission sent to the Controlling Board for review at its meeting scheduled for Monday, Sept. 26. The commission is asking the Controlling Board to increase the amount it pays Intralot by \$5.2 million this fiscal year and almost \$3.9 million in FY13 to add a video lottery central management system to its Ohio operations.