

Ohio Marine Trades Association  
and Government Advantage Group

# LEGISLATIVE REPORT

FEBRUARY 2024





## **OMTA Joins Ohio Chamber Travel and Tourism Committee**

The Ohio Chamber of Commerce is putting a bigger emphasis on travel and tourism. They created a position to specifically focus on the topic and they created a Travel and Tourism Committee. OMTA is a member of the committee and Michelle Burke and Amanda Sines attended the meeting held on February 22, 2024. The Ohio Restaurant and Hospitality Association gave a presentation on an expected ballot initiative to increase Ohio minimum wage and change how tipped employees are compensated. The group behind this initiative is still collecting signatures but is likely to be successful, so the Restaurant industry and other business groups are gearing up to launch a campaign against the measure.

## **ODNR Announces Boating Infrastructure Grant**

According to a release from ODNR, they have approved a Boating Infrastructure Grant (BIG) of \$1,430,885.50 for the renovation of DeRivera Park B Dock, situated in the heart of Put-in-Bay on South Bass Island. The transformative project aims to modernize and enhance one of the most popular destinations on Lake Erie, providing a state-of-the-art facility for boaters from Western Lake Erie and beyond.

"This project is a vital step in revitalizing DeRivera Park B Dock and ensuring it remains a cornerstone for boaters visiting Put-in-Bay," ODNR Director Mary Mertz said. "We are committed to creating a facility that not only meets the highest safety standards but also provides a welcoming and accessible environment for boaters exploring the Great Lakes."

## **State Park Drilling Update**

A group of environmental leaders are filing suit in an attempt to halt plans to drill on state lands. You can read more about that [here](#). The Ohio Oil and Gas Land Management Commission is scheduled to meet on February 26, 2024, to discuss and possibly act on bids to lease state lands for drilling, namely in Salt Fork State Park. The latest court filing attempts to block this meeting and the Commission from approving any leasing bids.

## **Legislation Removing the "Spotter" Requirement Has First Hearing**

Representatives Brett Hillyer and Bill Dean have introduced [House Bill 284](#) to remove the requirement that boats have a "spotter" when participating in towing water sports. Under the bill, a boat with a rearview mirror would be an acceptable alternative to a person serving as the spotter. The Ohio Marine Trades Association is opposed to this proposal for safety reasons. The bill also doesn't take into account risk levels on different bodies of water and at different times of the season, nor the skill level of the person being towed.

HB 284 has been assigned to the House Transportation Committee and a sponsoring hearing was held on February 15, 2024. You can watch the hearing [here](#).

## **House Approves Funding Package**

The House of Representatives passed a package of project appropriations through [House Bill 2](#) on February 7, 2024. These funds are one-time strategic investments, plus some significant capital appropriations.

While the House has acted, the Senate isn't expected to do so until April/May. Both Chambers must vote on the package for it to be final. Below are a few projects of interest to OMTA that were included in the House proposal.

- Mosquito Lake State Park Water Improvements \$330,350
- Kelley's Island East Lakeshore Shoreline Protection \$100,000
- Regional Safety Center at Tappan Lake \$450,000
- Lake Metroparks Lakefront Trail \$500,000
- Mentor on the Lake - Lake Overlook \$300,000
- Buckeye Lake North Shore Park and Pier \$10,000,000
- Indian Lake Advocacy Group \$5,000,000
- Lake Medina \$1,500,000
- Mosquito Lake State Park Water Improvements \$330,350
- Huron Boat Basin and Amphitheater Capital Improvement Project \$200,000
- The Landing in Erie County \$3,000,000 for the Southern Ohio region.