

Ohio Marine Trades Association  
and Government Advantage Group

# LEGISLATIVE REPORT

JUNE 2023



## August Election Teed Up

The Ohio legislature has approved a measure, SJR2, that would do two things:

1. Provide for an August 2023 special election.
2. On the August ballot would be a constitutional amendment to raise the threshold to change Ohio's constitution to 60% of the votes.

This highly controversial proposal is being put on an August ballot with the thought that a 60% vote threshold would make it more difficult for reproductive freedom advocates to be successful in passing their planned abortion amendment initiative in November 2023. If the amendment is passed in August, that November effort would then be held to the 60% threshold for passage. In addition to the reproductive health interests, many union organizations were also opposed to SJR 1. The issue will appear on the August ballot as Issue 1. Several large business groups like the Ohio Chamber of Commerce have come out in support of the initiative. They are not supporting the effort because of social issues, but because of efforts to put issues such as increasing the minimum wage on the ballot. Expect to hear a lot more about this issue over the next couple of months.

## State Budget Process Update - LEMTA Testifies

The first half of odd numbered years are dominated by debate on the state's biennial budget bill. The process starts with the Governor's proposal, which has been introduced as House Bill 33. The House passed their version of the proposal on April 26, 2023 by a vote of 77-19. The House made significant changes to the Governor's proposal. The bill will now be considered by the Ohio Senate, who is expected to make significant additional changes. The process will culminate with a conference committee in June to craft a final bill for enactment.

In the Governor's State of the State address on January 31, 2023, DeWine highlighted his priorities for the budget. These continue and expand upon his priorities during his first term as Governor. Those priorities include children's initiatives like his student wellness and success funds and a fair school funding formula. He is also continuing his priorities regarding water quality through the H2Ohio programs and funds. The budget includes funding for H2Ohio programs that will increase focus on the water quality of Ohio's rivers.

The House version of the budget retains the H2Ohio funding levels proposed by the Governor. However, the House did significantly reduce the GRF line items for ODNR compared with what DeWine had requested. ODNR has indicated that the \$16 million reduction in the Parks and Recreation line item would impact their ability to attract and retain natural resources officers. This is of concern to LEMTA as safety on the water is of paramount importance. LEMTA, represented by Michelle Burke, testified before the Senate requesting those reductions be restored. Many other outdoor recreation and preservation groups also testified in support of restoring ODNR's budget. You can read Ms. Burkes testimony [here](#). The committee Vice Chairman Landis appreciated the focus on the benefits the outdoors has on mental health.

The Governor had also proposed changing TourismOhio to the State Marketing Board. As a result of the proposal, LEMTA joined a group led by the Ohio Travel Association, formed to advocate for a continued focus on travel and tourism in Ohio. The House version of the budget did remove the proposed name change of TourismOhio.

The agencies mission is still being proposed to be modified to not only focus on promoting Ohio as a travel

destination, but instead to promote Ohio as a destination for “living, learning, working and traveling”. The sub bill also earmarks \$2 million from the TourismOhio budget for an economic impact study on Ohio’s trail system.

### **Policy Changes:**

The budget proposes a couple of policy changes. LEMTA has reviewed these changes and did not flag any concerns. They are summarized as follows:

- Removes floatation device designation list from 1547.25
- Amends requirements for powercraft to carry fire hydrants (1547.27)
- Allows 60 days to transfer title, as opposed to 30 days (1548.03)
- Changes what a registrar issues a watercraft trailer from a “placard” to a “license plate” (4503.311)

## **LEMTA Hosts Legislative Brunch**

LEMTA was able to host a lovely legislative brunch to kick off the Catawba Island Boat Show on April 28, 2023. In addition to Lt. Governor Jon Husted, we were joined by the following legislators: Senators Theresa Gavarone and Bill Reineke and Representatives Haraz Ghanbari and DJ Swearingen. Legislators and guest were able to hear an update on ODNR’s boating economic impact study and hear from other key leaders and advocates for Lake Erie.

## **Oil and Gas Drilling in State Parks and Lake Erie**

As previously reported, the Ohio legislature enacted changes to how oil and gas leases are approved by ODNR during the lame duck session through House Bill 507. The Department has finalized their rules and has opened the application process for drilling permits. On the first day that the portal was opened, the state received 8 applications for drilling for oil and gas on state lands. You can read coverage regarding latest on the application process [here](#).

Democrat Representative Michael Skindell has introduced House Bill 43 that would ban the removal of oil or natural gas from under Lake Erie. Skindell has introduced similar legislation in the past. HB 43 will be considered by the House Energy and Natural Resources Committee. The bill has had a sponsor hearing, but it is unlikely to gain much traction in the House.

## **Catalytic Converter Legislation**

Representatives Bob Young and Bill Roemer have introduced legislation in response to the increase in catalytic converter thefts in Ohio. The bill, House Bill 110, would make catalytic converters a special purchase article, requiring scrap metal dealers who purchase them comply with additional requirements. The bill prohibits a person from selling more than one catalytic converter per day, enhances penalties for theft of a catalytic converter, and creates other regulations. Catalytic converters are a high value item and has made them an increase target for theft at business and of person use vehicles. HB 110 is making progress through the House Criminal Justice Committee.

## **Minimum Wage Legislation and Ballot Initiative**

As is the case every General Assembly, legislation has been introduced to increase Ohio's minimum wage. This year it is House Bill 96. HB 96 is sponsored by Representatives Dontavius Jarrells and Ismail Mohamed. Under the bill the minimum wage would increase \$1 per year until it reaches \$15 in 2028, after that the rate would increase based on inflation.

Separately, a group called Raise the Wage Ohio is pursuing a statewide ballot initiative. They recently had their language certified by the Ohio Attorney General's office and the Ohio Ballot Board. This proposal would take the minimum wage to \$15 an hour in January 2026.

## **Youth Employment Bill Passes Senate - Making Progress in House**

Senator Tim Schaffer (R) has reintroduced Senate Bill 30 regarding youth employment. The bill would allow those under 16 to be employed after 7pm during school year. It would state that with parent or guardian's permission, those under 16 could work until 9pm. The Ohio Senate has already favorably passed SB 30 by a vote of 25-7. The bill was then considered by the House Commerce and Labor Committee which has reported the bill. It now awaits action by the full House of Representatives.