

Ohio Marine Trades Association
and Government Advantage Group

LEGISLATIVE REPORT

SEPTEMBER 2023



Redistricting Commission Finalizes Work

Every 10 years after the US census, Ohio's 99 House district and 33 Senate districts must be redrawn to reflect the results of the most recent census. The Ohio Redistricting Commission is responsible for redrawing those lines. The commission consist of the following members or their appointee: The Governor, House Speaker, Senate President, House Minority Leader, Senate Minority Leader, Secretary of State and the State Auditor. In 2022, the redistricting commission repeatedly submitted maps that were ruled unconstitutional by the Ohio Supreme Court. Although ruled unconstitutional, one map was finally implemented, by a federal judge panel, because of the pending 2022 November election.

The redistricting commission reconvened on September 13, 2023 to work on a new constitutional map for the next 6 years. After some public hearings and behind the scenes negotiations, the Commission adopted a set of maps unanimously on September 26, 2023. The unanimous nature of the vote was unexpected, as Ohio Democrats had repeatedly challenge the Republican drawn maps. However, the minority party did not feel like the current make-up of the Supreme Court would be favorable for them, and chose to move forward with the maps to at least have consistency.

Analysis of the maps indicate:

- The Senate map features 23 districts favoring Republicans, three of which are considered toss-ups, and 10 favoring Democrats, one of which is considered a toss-up, according to prior election results.
- The House map has 61 districts that favor Republicans, with three of those considered toss-ups, while Democrats have the advantage in 38 districts, eight of which are toss-ups.

Oil and Gas Drilling in State Parks

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. Areas up for consideration for drilling are: Salt Fork State Park, Wolf Run State Park, Valley Run Wildlife Area, and Zepernick Wildlife Area. A meeting of the Oil and Gas Land Management Commission regarding the leasing was hosted on September 18, 2023. However, the Commission delayed a vote on the land leases until their next meeting. This was after reports that many of the public comments in support of the lease agreements were submitted without the person named on those comments' permission. You can read more coverage on the hearing as reported by the Columbus Dispatch.

Scenic Rivers Legislation

Senators Bill Reineke and Bob Hackett have introduced Senate Bill 156 that would transfer the Wild, Scenic, and Recreational River Program from under the ODNR's Division of Parks and Watercraft to the Division of Natural Areas and Preserves (DNAP).

Requires DNAP to perform specified duties regarding publicly owned land along a designated river, including requiring the DNAP Director to do both of the following:

- Adopt rules governing the use, visitation, and protection of scenic river lands and other specified publicly owned lands that are administered by DNAP and that are within the watersheds of wild, scenic, and recreational rivers; and
- Provide for the establishment of facilities and improvements within the state system of wild, scenic, and

recreational rivers, scenic river lands, and other specified publicly owned lands that are necessary for their visitation, use, restoration, and protection and that do not impair their natural character.

SB 156 is being considered by the Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee. A sponsor hearing was held on September 26, 2023. In testimony the sponsors indicated: This legislation would remove the creation of a "Wild, Scenic or Recreational River Area" which is described as a 1,000-foot corridor along a designated river, due to concerns from river front property owners regarding the loss of private property rights.

Election Update

On November 7, 2023, Ohioans will be at the polls to consider least 2 high profile statewide initiatives:

- Issue 1 is a Constitutional amendment regarding reproductive rights; and
- Issue 2 is an initiated statute to legalize recreational marijuana.

Senator Nathan Manning has said that he wants to move his Senate Bill 26, to make changes to the offense of operating a vehicle or watercraft under the influence of marijuana, particularly if Issue 2 passes. "If Issue 2 does pass it makes it that much more important that we do update our OVI laws on marijuana and THC and make sure we're testing correctly and getting people that are impaired and not people that maybe took it days, weeks or months ago," he said.

Expect to hear much about both of these issues as the election nears.

Minimum Wage Legislation

As is the case every General Assembly, legislation has been introduced to increase Ohio's minimum wage. This year it is House Bill 96 and Senate Bill 146. HB 96 is sponsored by Representatives Dontavius Jarrells and Ismail Mohamed, while SB 149 is being led by Senators Kent Smith and Hearcel Craig, with the remaining Senate Democrats signing on as co-sponsors. Under the bills the minimum wage would increase \$1 per year until it reaches \$15 in 2028, after that the rate would increase based on inflation.

Minimum Wage Increase for 2024

Ohio current minimum wage requirements will be adjusted starting January 1, 2024. The minimum hourly wage will be \$10.45 (up from \$10.10). The minimum wage applies for employees of businesses with annual gross receipts of more than \$385,000.

Youth Employment Bill Passes Ohio Senate

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 and will now be considered by the Ohio House of Representatives.

Recently a Fallon Research poll of 501 registered voters conducted on this topic and found 55% of respondents back legislation that would allow 14- and 15-year-old workers to be employed between 7 p.m. and 9 p.m. during the school year with parental permission. About 37% of respondents were opposed, while 8% were unsure if they supported the measure.