

Ohio Marine Trades Association  
and Government Advantage Group

# LEGISLATIVE REPORT

OCTOBER 2023



## Legislation Removing the “Spotter” Requirement Introduced

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. This is a proposal that has come up for many years now, and at one point was vetoed by Governor Kasich as part of a transportation budget. 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 skill level of the person being towed.

HB 284 has been assigned to the House Transportation Committee. OMTA representatives are meeting with members of the committee to express our opposition. Should the bill get hearings, OMTA will plan on testifying.

## Mertz to Chair Great Lakes Commission

Ohio Department of Natural Resources Director Mary Mertz has been elected chair of the Great Lakes Commission.

“It's my honor to be elected chair of the Great Lakes Commission,” Mertz said in a statement. “In my role as director of the ODNR, I'm proud to be implementing our H2Ohio campaign to restore and create wetlands in key locations across Ohio, focusing on the Lake Erie watershed. I look forward to bringing this energy to protecting our other incredible bodies of water in the Great Lakes basin.” The commission is a partnership among great lakes states aimed at tackling water quality and other issues tied to the lakes.

## Hunting and Fishing Amendment

Should hunting and fishing be a Constitutional right in Ohio? Some Ohio lawmakers think so. Representatives Ron Ferguson and Nick Santucci have introduced House Joint Resolution 5 to start that process of going to the ballot. Legislators cannot solely change the State Constitution. However, they can pass a resolution to take an issue directly to the ballot for a citizen vote. HJR 5 will be considered by the House Energy and Natural Resources Committee. A sponsor hearing was held on October 25, 2023. Many committee members asked for more clarity on the definition of “traditional methods” of hunting and fishing.

## Organ Donation

Representatives Kevin Miller and Rodney Creech have introduced House Bill 256 that would allow Ohioans to register to become organ donors when completing their hunting and fishing licenses application. During a hearing before the House Public Health Policy Committee Barry Massa, executive director of the LifeCenter Organ Donor Network, offered support from the state's three organ procurement organizations. “While driver's licenses in Ohio are now renewed every four or eight years, hunting and fishing permits are purchased annually, allowing us to reach more Ohioans on a more regular basis,” he said.

## ODNR Rule

The Ohio Department of Natural Resources has filed a proposal to create an administrative rule that would: requires any person or business to obtain a permit for any device used to limit or prevent the formation of ice on waters under the authority of the Division of Parks and Watercraft. OMTA submitted comments to better understand the impact of this proposal. In response ODNR clarified that the agency will not be charging a fee for the permitting application or processing. They also plan to work with stakeholders to draft the application.