

Ohio Marine Trades Association
and Government Advantage Group

LEGISLATIVE REPORT

JULY 2024



Tourism Committee Meets

OMTA is an active member of the Ohio Chamber of Commerce’s Tourism Committee. We were represented at their meeting on July 17th. On the agenda was the failed attempt to put an increase to the Ohio minimum wage on the November ballot. However, we do expect this issue to be raised again and the group will plan to work in opposition to the increase in our Constitution. We also discussed the rollout of Ohio’s recreational marijuana program which is expected to have sales begin this summer. We began to discuss a priority for the next state budget cycle to increase state funding for the Ohio Tourism Division under the Department of Development. Currently, Ohio budgets \$7.5 million annually for promoting Ohio tourism. Comparing that to other states, Ohio is woefully under the regional average of \$25 million in spending by our border states.

The Chamber is planning a [Travel and Tourism Summit](#), their first ever, on October 30th at the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame.

Minimum Wage Initiative Fails to Make Ballot

OMTA has been tracking an effort to put an amendment on the ballot to increase Ohio’s minimum wage. The effort to collect signatures to qualify for the ballot was not successful for the 2024 election. However, supporters intend to try again to qualify for the 2025 election. You can read more about this development [here](#).

Sales Tax Receipts

The Ohio Department of Taxation has posted sale receipts for sales and use tax collections for the second half of 2023. Collections from watercraft including state and local receipts were \$14,480,871. These numbers for watercraft represent a roughly \$1 million decrease on total collections over the same time period in 2022. Total collections for watercraft and motor vehicles were \$1,220,591,409.

Second half of 2023 (July 2023 – December 2023)

	State Collections	Permissive Collections	Total Collections
Collections from sales of motor vehicles	\$ 968,641,180	\$ 237,469,357	\$1,206,110,537
Collections from the sales of watercraft	\$ 11,757,843	\$ 2,723,028	\$ 14,480,871
Totals	\$ 980,399,023	\$ 240,192,385	\$1,220,591,40

Legislature Adjourns for the Summer

On June 26, 2024, the Ohio House of Representatives and Ohio Senate held their last session days before breaking for the summer recess. The Chambers considered dozens of bills, with several being of interest to OMTA. The legislature is not expected to return to official business until the fall, or possibly after the November election.

Legislature Finalizes Capitol Appropriation Bill

A priority of the legislature was passing a capital appropriation bill. The ultimate vehicle was [House Bill 2](#). The legislature passed both chambers on June 26th with an emergency clause, so it will come into effect immediately upon the Governor's signature. In testimony delivered by the Office and Budget & Management Director Murnieks stated: This capital budget provides the Ohio Department of Natural Resources with a total of \$298.2 million. This supports improvements and upgrades to lodges, cabins, campgrounds, and playgrounds, and enhances the safety of our communities through dam rehabilitation projects statewide, including the Muskingum River State Park locks and dams from Zanesville south to the Ohio River at Marietta.

Additional appropriations of interest to OMTA include:

- Kelley's Island East Lakeshore Shoreline Protection \$400,000
- Buckeye Lake North Shore Park and Pier \$11,000,000
- Indian Lake Advocacy Group \$5,000,000
- Lake Medina \$1,500,000
- Fairport Harbor Marina Boat Launch - \$350,000
- Buckeye Lake Boat Ramps and Pier Enabling Project - \$150,000
- Kelley Nature Preserve Boat Ramp - \$50,000
- Marina Boat Dock Riverside Renovation - \$300,000
- Milton Township Courtesy Boat Docks - \$60,000

Great Lake Restoration Initiative – Passed by the House

Representatives Tom Patton and Michael Skindell are pursuing passage of [House Concurrent Resolution 14](#), which urges Congress to enact the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative. Resolutions are more symbolic, and Congress isn't beholden to act based on Ohio passing this. However, they can demonstrate support for urgency to act at the federal level. OMTA officially lent support to the measure at the proponent hearing on April 23, 2014. OMTA testimony said in part: We encourage all members of our Ohio state and federal delegation in supporting Ohio's most valuable natural resource, Lake Erie, through of reauthorizing the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative Act of 2024. Fishing, boating, swimming, lakefront, and harbor towns all depend upon a healthy Lake Erie. The importance of restoration of our Great Lakes water cannot be underestimated. This legislation will improve our state's economy and provide for better quality of life for all Ohioans.

HCR 14 unanimously cleared the Ohio House of Representatives on June 26, 2024.

Scenic Rivers Legislation Clears Legislature

Senators Bill Reineke and Bob Hackett championed [Senate Bill 156](#), which 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). 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 riverfront property owners regarding the loss of private property rights. SB 156 is supported by the Ohio Department of Natural Resources.

OMTA requested an amendment to SB 156 that incorporates the provision of [Senate Bill 7](#) into SB 156. SB 7 increases Boater Safety Education Grant maximum awards from \$30K to \$60K and designates April as Powerboat Safety Month, with a focus on carbon monoxide. OMTA submitted proponent testimony on the amendment to the House Energy and Natural Resources Committee for the May 1, 2024 hearing. The amendment was incorporated without objection. The House favorably passed SB 156 on June 26th by a vote of 96-1, with the Senate concurring with the House changes unanimously. This bill will now head to Governor DeWine's desk for signature.

Ohio House Passes Bill to Designate the Walleye as the State Fish

Representatives Sean Brennan and DJ Swearingen have introduced legislation to designate the walleye as the official state fish. [House Bill 599](#) was quickly considered by the House State and Local Government Committee, with OMTA weighing in with proponent testimony. OMTA stated in part: While there are several types of fish anglers covet, the walleye in Ohio, particularly Lake Erie, are at the top of the list. HB 599 cleared the Ohio House by a vote of 93-4. You can watch the floor debate [here](#), where Michelle Burke and OMTA get a shoutout! (HB 599 is 1 hour in). During Fish Ohio Day on June 25th, Governor DeWine indicated his support for this bill.