

Ohio Marine Trades Association
and Government Advantage Group

LEGISLATIVE REPORT

FEBRUARY 2025



Lake Erie Commission Appointment

OMTA is pleased to announce that our President Michelle Burke was recently appointed by Governor Mike DeWine to serve on the Lake Erie Commission. The role of the Ohio Lake Erie Commission is to *preserve Lake Erie's natural resources, to protect the quality of its waters and ecosystem, and to promote economic development of the region by ensuring the coordination of policies and programs of state government pertaining to water quality, toxic substances, and coastal resource management.*

As the State continues to invest in Lake Erie, we know Michelle will be a great asset to the Commission. The appointment does need consent from the Ohio Senate to be official, but OMTA is confident Michelle is the right person for the appointment.

Legislature Adjourns for the Year

On December 18, 2024, the Ohio General Assembly had its final session day for the year. This was a hectic day that went into the early hours of December 19th. Any pending legislation that didn't pass will "die" and need to be reintroduced in 2025, starting the legislative process over. Below is a summary of the final legislative activity of the year. The House and Senate will return on January 6, 2025 to swear in the 136th General Assembly in their opening ceremonies. 2025 will be a biennial budget year, so those deliberations will take most of the 1st half of the year.

Walleye as the State Fish – Not Finalized

OMTA has been supporting [HB 599](#) to designate the walleye as the state fish. This bill did not cross the finish line this year but could be reintroduced next General Assembly as both sponsors Sean Brennen and DJ Swearingin will be returning.

Great Lake Restoration Initiative – Finalized

Representatives Tom Patton and Michael Skindell championed [House Concurrent Resolution 14](#) that urges Congress to enact the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative. OMTA submitted proponent testimony to the House and Senate Committees considering this proposal. Additional proponents include the Ohio Farm Bureau, the Ohio Chamber of Commerce, and the Cleveland Water Alliance. The House passed the Resolution unanimously in June and the Senate passed the measure on December 18th by a vote of 30-1. OMTA was pleased to see this one pass.

Sunset Review Recommendations - Finalized

The Sunset Review Committee was formed to review Ohio boards and commissions, including the Waterways Safety Council, of which Michelle Burke currently serves, and the Lake Erie Commission. The committee reviews these bodies and make recommendations as to if they still serve a purpose or should be sunset. The committee recommended that both of these agencies be renewed and will next be reviewed in 2028. The Committee's recommendations were ultimately amended into [HB 238](#), that implements occupational license review recommendations. Action on this bill was completed on December 18th and is now awaiting the Governor's signature.

Proposal to Establish River Commission - Finalized

A proposal to create an Ohio Rivers Commission has earned approval from the legislature. There were bills introduced in both the House and Senate, but it was an omnibus funding package approved on December 18th that ended up being the final vehicle to send to the Governor. Under the provisions included in [SB 54](#), the Commission is to *develop and promote economic development, marine cargo terminal operations, and **travel and tourism** on the Ohio river and its tributaries*. The Commission will be housed under the Department of Development.