

Ohio Marine Trades Association  
and Government Advantage Group

# LEGISLATIVE REPORT

**|** FEBRUARY 2026



## Waterways Safety Council Quarterly Public Meeting

Date & Time: Wednesday, March 25, 9:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m. Meeting Link: <https://rebrand.ly/wscouncil>

Rep. Darnell Blackshear and Sen. Casey Weinstein are planning to introduce legislation that will require data centers to report water usage annually, limit average daily consumptive water use to 5 million gallons or less, and data center developers must pay for required infrastructure upgrades caused by their water demands.

The Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) is preparing to propose changes to the Ohio Administrative Code that would rescind and replace an existing rule. The key change would introduce an online option for completing the abbreviated boater education examination required for renting motorized watercraft powered by more than 10 horsepower. Currently, individuals subject to Ohio's mandatory boater education law who are renting such vessels have only one option: a written (in-person) exam. The proposed rule would add the convenience of an online examination as an alternative. OMTA is currently drafting comments on the proposal.

The General Assembly has announced that they will be accepting submissions to the state's capital appropriations bill until March 12th.

- 136th GA Capital Budget Application
- Eligible capital projects

## OVI Legislation

Legislation that has already passed the Ohio Senate is beginning hearings in the Ohio House. [SB 55](#) from Senator Nathan Manning, would update Ohio laws regarding OVI's to better measure driving while under the influence of marijuana in light of Ohio legalizing the use of marijuana. This would include operating a watercraft while under the influence.

## Hunting and Fishing a Constitutional Right?

The legislature continues to debate [SJR 8](#) that would put a constitutional amendment before the Ohio votes to establish a right to hunt and fish. At a hearing this week, the Senate committee heard from both proponent and opponents. Numerous individuals submitted opponent testimony, along with animal right organizations, Save Ohio Parks, Ohio Houndsman Association, Ohio State Trappers Association, and others. Proponents of the measure include the NRA and the American Sports Fishing Association.

## H2Ohio Study

The Nature Conservancy in Ohio and Earth Economics have released a study regarding the efficacy of the H2Ohio Program. The report focuses on the impacts of the wetland development and preservation programs, as well as the agricultural best management practices. You can read the report [here](#).

## ODNR Proposed rule comments

OMTA commented on the proposed rule from ODNR on the safety test for boat rentals, you can read the comments in the included link. OMTA ODNR Rule comments.

## OVI Legislation Proponents

[SB 55](#) from Senator Nathan Manning, would update Ohio laws regarding OVI's to better measure driving while under the influence of marijuana in light of Ohio legalizing the use of marijuana. This would include operating a watercraft while under the influence. The bill had a proponent hearing before the Judiciary Committee. Groups such as the Ohio State Bar Association and the ACLU Ohio are backing the measure.

## Veteran Discounts

Legislation to provide for a veterans discount, [SB 223](#), had a proponent hearing. The bill requires ODNR's Division of Parks and Watercraft to establish a discount of at least 25% for park services and rentals for veterans and service members. The Veterans of Foreign Wars and the American Legion Auxiliary, Cleveland Unit 2 are proponents of the bill. If passed this could result in significant decreases to ODNR's revenue. The bill passed the Ohio Senate unanimously, and the House seems poised to follow suit.

## Tennefoss Appointment Confirmed

OMTA Chairman Gary Tennefoss's appointment was made official. The Ohio Senate unanimously confirmed the Governor's appointment of Gary to the Waterways Safety Council. OMTA appreciates Gary's representation of recreational boating in this capacity.

## ODNR and Ohio Clean Marinas Encourage Boaters to Recycle Shrink Wrap This Spring

The Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR), in partnership with the Ohio Clean Marinas Program, is encouraging boaters to recycle boat shrink wrap this spring instead of sending it to landfills. Each year, thousands of pounds of shrink wrap are removed from boats across Ohio. A single cover can equal up to 2,000 plastic grocery bags. When improperly discarded, shrink wrap can break down into microplastics that persist in landfills and potentially enter waterways.

Through the Ohio Boat Shrink Wrap Recycling Program, boaters can drop off clean, bundled shrink wrap at designated locations statewide—many by appointment. Last year alone, the program recycled 60,000 pounds of plastic and has collected more than 2.6 million pounds over its 20-year history.

## Data Center Study Commission

[HB 646](#), legislation creating a data center study commission to examine the environmental and economic impacts of data centers in the state, recently received its second hearing.

During the hearing, the Ohio Farm Bureau Federation testified as a proponent of the bill, expressing support for a formal review of how data center development affects land use, energy consumption, water resources, and local economies.

## Capital Budget

The Ohio House Finance Committee announced it will hold an informal hearing next week on the state capital budget process. At that hearing, committee members are expected to hear from the Ohio Office of Budget and Management, which will provide an update on the state's revenue projections that inform budgeting decisions.

## News to Peruse

[Lake Erie is nearly frozen over: Could it hit a rare full freeze?](#)

[Winds tear open 80-mile crack in Lake Erie's frozen surface](#)

[Coast Guard limits Fairport Harbor ice-breaking operations](#)

[Here's exactly how much federal money your Ohio Congress member brought home](#)

[Lorain County campaign addresses environmental impact of winter salt runoff](#)

[Bottled water contains 3 times more nanoplastics than tap water](#)