

Ohio Marine Trades Association
and Government Advantage Group

LEGISLATIVE REPORT

AUGUST 2026



State Updates: BWC Dividend and New Ohio Rivers Grant Program

Governor DeWine asked the Bureau of Workers' Compensation (BWC) Board of Directors to approve a dividend projected at \$1 billion for Ohio businesses. If adopted, this dividend would bring the total amount paid to private and public employers under Governor DeWine's administration to \$10.2 billion.

Ohio Rivers Commission announced a new grant program that will help communities across Ohio's 14 river counties turn local opportunities into economic growth, prepare workers for in-demand careers, and attract more visitors to the region. Local governments, schools, career centers, nonprofits, ports, terminals, and economic development agencies are eligible to apply for up to \$100,000 in grant funding per project, with approximately \$500,000 available in total. Projects must address at least one of three categories: River infrastructure and port readiness planning, Maritime and river-based workforce development or river tourism and recreation. [MORE INFORMATION: Grant Program Guidelines](#)

OMTA Thanks Rep. DJ Swearingen for His Service and Support

State Rep DJ Swearingen announced he is withdrawing his candidacy for his final term representing the 89th House District which encompasses all of Erie County, most of Ottawa County, and a portion of Huron County. Erie County Treasurer Caleb Stidham was tapped this week as the Republican nominee to run this fall for the 89th House District seat. Rep. Swearingen has been a champion for OMTA members and our issues. We thank him for his dedication and wish him well in his next chapter of service.

Ohio Waterways Safety Council Continues Focus on Safer Boating

The Waterways Safety Council held their quarterly meeting on August 19th. OMTA Chairman Gary Tennefoss continues to serve as a member of the council. The council discussed some of ODNR's efforts to promote boating, specifically safe boating. That effort was highlighted at the recent Ohio State Fair. The group also discussed accident data and what education would help boaters be safe on the water. Unfortunately, the department confirmed they do not intend to restart boating grants in the immediate future as their budget is currently set. The council also continues to discuss the idea of standardized signage at boat ramps. The council's next meeting is scheduled for November 18th and are open to the public.

Ohio Strengthens State Park Safety

Governor DeWine has released the findings of the Public Safety in Ohio State Parks Working Group, which was formed in 2025 to review emergency response needs in Ohio's state parks. The report identifies seven recommendations to strengthen coordination and resources for state and local first responders, building on existing partnerships that help keep Ohio's parks safe for millions of annual visitors. [Recommendations from the Public Safety in Ohio State Parks Working Group](#).

News to Peruse

[New Kelleys Island trail packs a lot of history into a short hike](#)

[Bacteria advisories in effect at Maumee Bay State Park beaches](#)

[Josh Project marks 20 years of teaching kids to swim](#)

[Toledo area waterways are getting another 37.6 million of improvements](#)

[I-X Center is back; Haslams credited for return of big shows](#)

[Toledo Harbor's annual dredging operation is set to begin in September](#)

[Island projects help bring back the Maumee River's 'story to tell'](#)

[Ohio lawmakers urge Trump administration to restart Great Lakes carp barrier project](#)

[Lake Erie, other Great Lakes rank among top fishing destinations](#)

[Angling advice: During perch fishing season, anglers say keep it simple](#)

[Can Floodplain Wetlands Reduce Nutrients Causing Harmful Algal Blooms?](#)

[Hinckley Lake kayak launch: Metroparks seek grant for upgrades](#)

[New database aims to curb invasive species sales in Great Lakes region](#)