



STATEHOUSE REPORT

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Neithammer joins CCAO policy team



Brian Mead, Cheryl Subler, Suzanne Dulaney, Kate Neithammer, John Leutz, Brad Cole

Kate Neithammer has joined the CCAO Policy Team as our Health and Human Services Policy Analyst. She will provide legislative advocacy and member services in the realm of health and human services, including family assistance, Medicaid, children services, child support, workforce development, developmental disabilities, county hospitals, and county homes. She also will staff the CCAO Health & Human Services Committee. To read more about Kate's background, please go this week's edition of [Counties Current](#).

Please join us in welcoming Kate!

Amendments offered for unemployment compensation bill

On Tuesday the House Insurance Committee heard a number of amendments to [HB394](#) proposed by its sponsor Representative Barbara Sears. A large part of the hearing focused on an amendment that would create an exception for the construction industry, whose workers often have to rely on unemployment compensation because of the seasonal nature of those jobs. The bill, which attempts to reform the unemployment compensation system and restore solvency, has met with some criticism because it would reduce the number of weeks that benefits can be claimed. Currently unemployment benefits can be claimed for 26 weeks but HB 394 would lower that to a range of 12 to 20 weeks.

Other amendments that garnered comments from the committee addressed Social Security offset requirements and “just cause” disqualification, which would disqualify an individual from receiving benefits if they are fired for violating the terms of an employee handbook.

If you would like to know more about HB 394, please contact CCAO Policy Analyst Kate Neithammer at 614-220-7996 or kneithammer@ccao.org

Ohio Grace Commission takes testimony on Common Sense Initiative (CSI) from Lieutenant Governor’s Office

Mark Hamlin, Deputy Chief of Staff for Lieutenant Governor Mary Taylor spoke to Ohio’s Grace Commission, a joint commission of the General Assembly statutorily required to:

- Identify opportunities for increased efficiency and reduced costs achievable by executive action or legislation
- Determine areas where managerial accountability can be enhanced and administrative controls improved
- Suggest short term and long term managerial operating improvements, and
- Specify areas where further study can be justified by potential savings



Senator Coley

Hamlin recounted the history of a Regulatory Reform Task Force created by the legislature in 2008 that traveled Ohio to talk with businesses about how Ohio was performing from a regulatory standpoint. What this task force learned is that Ohio had a reputation for red tape and bureaucracy which was impeding Ohio’s ability to compete for jobs and economic development. The task force findings led the Kasich Administration to create the Common Sense Initiative (CSI) in January 2011 for reviewing and evaluating regulations. The guiding principles for CSI have been:

- Regulations should facilitate economic growth
- Regulations should be transparent and responsive
- Compliance should be as easy and inexpensive as possible
- Regulations should be fair and consistently applied



Representative Schuring

In order to accomplish the purposes of CSI, the administration pursued two tracks:

- Reform the administrative rulemaking function, and
- Create an ombudsman function which allows a business, or an entire industry, to work through CSI if it has reached a dead end working with the regulatory process.

According to Hamlin, since its creation CSI has reviewed more than 7700 rules and approximately 58 percent have been amended or rescinded. They encourage regulatory agencies to reach out to businesses to achieve the regulatory purpose in the easiest and least burdensome way possible.

Regarding the second track, CSI effectively operates as a problem solver working with individual businesses or whole industries and regulatory agencies to solve specific problems encountered by the business community.

The Grace Commission is chaired by Senator Bill Coley (R-Liberty Township) and Representative Kirk Schuring (R-Canton) and is composed primarily of non-legislators. The Commission will meet on the third Thursday of each month. The next meeting is scheduled for February 18th.

The co-chairs indicated that at future meetings the commission will hear testimony from the Auditor of State on performance auditing, the International Ombudsman Association, and Ohio Department of Administrative Services regarding Lean Ohio, a program in Ohio to make services simpler, faster, better, and less costly.

For additional information on this topic, contact Brad Cole of the CCAO staff at bcole@ccao.org

House establishes medical marijuana task force

Consistent with his comments made during the campaign to pass a constitutional amendment to legalize marijuana which was soundly defeated on the 2015 November ballot, House Speaker Cliff Rosenberger (R-Clarksville) this week announced the creation of a 15-person task force to look at medical marijuana. Speaker Rosenberger indicated that the House's goal "is to start a discussion, which will provide more information, facts, perspectives to the debate in order to guide our future actions and policies toward a measured approach on medical marijuana."



Rep. Kirk Schuring (R-Canton) will chair the panel that includes representatives from the medical field, law enforcement and medical marijuana advocates. Jimmy Gould, who was associated with ResponsibleOhio, the proponents of the marijuana legalization ballot issue last year, stated that he had had "long conversations with the Speaker and we came away with what we think is the best thing for the state of Ohio. Mr. Gould noted that ResponsibleOhio no longer exists and that the marijuana legalization proponents are participating in order for the group to come up with the best solution so that people can have medical marijuana in the state of Ohio, and do it right. Speaker Rosenberger said Mr. Gould reached out to him and the two have had conversations about the issue over the last few months.

The Speaker urged groups that intend to put issues on the ballot related to marijuana to join in the discussion and participate in the task force and to understand that the task force is their willing partner and intends to listen to them.

Rep. Schuring also announced the task force's meeting schedule. All the meetings will be held at the Statehouse. In addition, members of the task force will be able to invite people to speak and will accept testimony from the general public. The task force's first meeting will be an organizational meeting on Jan. 28 at 3 p.m. The task force will then hold meetings on Feb. 11 at 3 p.m.; Feb. 18, Feb. 25 and March 10 at 7 p.m.; and March 17 and March 31 at 3 p.m. An April 7 meeting has been scheduled in case it is necessary.

On the Senate side, Sen. Dave Burke (R-Marysville) and Sen. Kenny Yuko (D-Richmond Hts.) plan to hold public town hall meetings around the state to gather input. "We have had ongoing dialogue with the Senate and plan on continuing that," Rep. Schuring said. "At the end of the day we hope to have an opportunity to share what we've learned in this process here in the House and in their process in the Senate and come together on something."

The members of the task force are:

- Rep. Kirk Schuring (R-Canton), chair
- Rep. Steve Huffman (R-Tipp City)
- Rep. Dan Ramos (D-Lorain)
- Dr. Brian Santin, Ohio State Medical Association
- Nick Lashutka, president, the Ohio Children's Hospital Association
- Betty Montgomery, former Ohio Attorney General
- Chris Stock, advocate for medical marijuana
- Jimmy Gould, formerly of ResponsibleOhio
- Bill Sopko, chair of the Ohio Manufacturers' Association
- Lora Miller, Ohio Council of Retail Merchants
- Linda Hondros, Ohio Chamber of Commerce
- Matt Szollosi, Affiliated Construction Trades
- Larry Moliterno, Ohio Alliance of Recovery Providers
- Gary Wolske, Fraternal Order of Police of Ohio
- Matt Lutz, Muskingum County Sheriff

Bills Introduced



SB 258

POLICE INVESTIGATIONS ([Williams, S.](#), [Tavares, C.](#)) To establish the duties and authority of the Attorney General to investigate and prosecute cases relating to the death of a person caused by a peace officer. En. 109.021.

Hearing Schedule



Tuesday, January 19

House Insurance ([Committee Record](#)), (Chr. [Hackett, B.](#), 466-1470), Rm. 121, 11:00

HB 394

UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION ([Sears, B.](#)) To temporarily change the taxable wage base under Ohio's Unemployment Compensation Law, to remove dependency classes for unemployment compensation benefit eligibility, to temporarily freeze automatic increases for weekly unemployment

compensation benefit amounts, to reduce the number of weeks for which an individual may receive unemployment compensation benefits, to abolish the Unemployment Compensation Advisory Council, and to make other changes to Ohio's Unemployment Compensation Law. --**5th Hearing-All testimony-Possible substitute**

House Government Accountability & Oversight ([Committee Record](#)), (Chr. [Brown, T.](#), 466-8104), Rm. 114, 1:30 pm

SB 63 **ONLINE VOTER REGISTRATION** ([LaRose, F.](#)) To create an online voter registration system. --**2nd Hearing-Proponent**

HB 278 **HUMANE SOCIETIES** ([Hambley, S.](#)) To require approval by the board of county commissioners, instead of the probate judge, of appointments of agents by county humane societies outside a municipal corporation, to specify that a county humane society is a political subdivision, to make its directors, agents, officers, and employees subject to the Ethics Law, and to increase the salaries paid to the agents. --**2nd Hearing-Proponent**

Wednesday, January 20

Senate Ways & Means ([Committee Record](#)), (Chr. [Peterson, B.](#), 466-8156), South Hearing Rm., 9:30 am

HB 233 **REDEVELOPMENT DISTRICTS** ([Schuring, K.](#)) To authorize municipal corporations to create downtown redevelopment districts and innovation districts for the purposes of promoting the rehabilitation of historic buildings, creating jobs, encouraging economic development in commercial and mixed-use areas, and supporting grants and loans to technology-oriented and other businesses. --**2nd Hearing-Proponent**

SB 235 **PROPERTY TAXES** ([Beagle, B.](#), [Coley, B.](#)) To exempt from property tax the increased value of property on which industrial or commercial development is planned until construction of new commercial or industrial facilities at the property commences. --**2nd Hearing-Proponent**

Senate Session, (Chr. [Faber, K.](#), 466-4900), Senate Chamber, 1:30 pm

Senate Finance ([Committee Record](#)), (Chr. [Oelslager, S.](#), 466-0626), Finance Hearing Rm., 2:30 pm or after session

- First hearing-Sponsor & Proponent-Capital appropriations bill to be introduced by Sen. Oelslager-Pending referral

Thursday, January 21

Joint Medicaid Oversight Committee ([Committee Record](#)), (Chr. [Sears, B.](#), 466-1731), Senate Finance Hearing Rm, 9:00 am