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# STATEHOUSE REPORT

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**September 25, 2015**

## **Laura Abu-Absi departs CCAO**

Senior Policy Analyst Laura Abu-Absi has left CCAO to join the Ohio Job and Family Service Directors Association as Deputy Director. Laura has managed the health and human services issues over the past five years that she has worked for the Association and is well qualified to assume her new position. We congratulate Laura on her new position and look forward to continuing to work with her.



## **Severance tax discussions continue but no resolution appears to be in sight**

Lawmakers pursuing a compromise over Gov. John Kasich's proposed oil and gas severance tax hike appear no closer to getting the industry on board than they were when he first floated the idea four years ago. In fact, the polarized positions over the issue seem to be hardening even further as energy commodity prices flat-line, making any resolution to the stalemate a likely one-sided affair. The uphill climb for policymakers who support a tax increase is getting steeper even as lawmakers continue regular meetings with industry officials and maintain the two sides are getting closer.

Sen. Bob Peterson (R-Sabina) this week indicated that the parties continue to discuss options including a phase-in over time or a tax that could float depending on market fluctuations. "I don't think it's fair for any industry to go from a low rate of tax to a higher rate of tax overnight," he said. Peterson said the parties have been meeting almost weekly for the last few months and that more talks are scheduled in the coming days. "We've had good discussions and great progress on some areas and not on the others," Sen. Peterson said. "The great thing is, this is the first time throughout this whole process I believe that we've had ... all players, the administration, the House, the Senate, minority members all working together, all discussing the issues," he said. "We're making progress in all areas." However, Sen. Peterson acknowledged that plummeting oil and gas prices have complicated the push for higher taxes.

Nevertheless, industry insiders who have participated in the talks say they have never wavered from their initial position that a tax increase is neither acceptable nor warranted. Rather, industry representatives involved in the talks say, they are merely participating in the process to further inform policymakers about their operations and related challenges. "We appreciate the

opportunity to present our positions, but the fact of the matter is we are in no way negotiating the severance tax," Chris Zeigler, executive director of the American Petroleum Institute Ohio, said in an interview. "That's been adamantly stated throughout this process," he added. "Our concerns are based on ... commodity prices in the Appalachian basin (that) are at historic lows and we don't know necessarily when that's going to change." Mr. Zeigler said the industry's goal is to inform, not discuss tax hikes. "That's not what we're doing in these workgroup meetings," he said. "We need to continue to provide them information that will be helpful if and when the time comes that they do consider drafting legislation. - that they take the information that's been presented into account."

Senate President Keith Faber (R-Celina) originally set a deadline for the working group to come up with a report by October 1, but the Senate President said in a recent interview that he is more concerned about getting a workable plan than meeting that deadline. While the more formalized process of the 2020 Tax Study Committee with the House has not yet started, Sen. Peterson said he still expects the workgroup to generate a report sometime in October.

## **New Website Explaining Senate Bill 1 regulations for farmers, businesses and local governments**



State Representative [Jim Buchy](#) (R-Greenville) has announced the launch of a website intended to serve as a resource for those impacted by [Senate Bill 1](#) as they plan for changes to their farms, businesses, and municipalities.

"Working with other legislators, we were able to identify the best new agricultural practices and use those as a model for the regulations that now impact northwest Ohio," Rep. Buchy said. "The goal of this website is to make those new regulations easier to navigate and understand from a legislative perspective."

Senate Bill 1, signed into law by Governor Kasich in April, prohibits the spreading of manure, chemical fertilizer, and sewer sludge on frozen ground, saturated ground, and under certain weather forecast conditions.

"Senate Bill 1 included regulations on agriculture in northwest Ohio, but the bill also addressed concerns with waste water treatment and dredging across the entire state," Buchy said. "Those impacted by Senate Bill 1 now have a resource to help answer common questions as they begin to implement changes on their farms and in their businesses and municipalities."

The website can be accessed at [tinyurl.com/newaglaws](http://tinyurl.com/newaglaws).

For additional information on agriculture and water quality issues, please contact CCAO staffer Brian Mead at [bmead@ccao.org](mailto:bmead@ccao.org) or 614-220-7982.

## Bills Introduced



**SB 212 ELECTION PROCEDURES (Uecker, J.)** To reduce the minimum number of precinct election officials in a precinct in which electronic pollbooks are used and to eliminate the requirement that a board of elections send a notice to a person's residence address when the board cancels the person's voter registration because it received a report of the person's death. Am. 3501.22 and 3503.21

**HB 334 TAX EXEMPTION (Buchy, J.)** To exempt memberships to gyms or other recreational facilities operated by nonprofit organizations from sales and use taxation. Am. 5739.01

**HB 335 COURT JURISDICTION (Craig, H., Grossman, C.)** To specify the jurisdiction of municipal and county courts over municipal traffic ordinances and to establish requirements governing fines, fees, or other charges for traffic violations and infractions imposed by a municipal corporation that does not have the authority to establish a mayor's court. Am. 1901.20 and 1907.02 and to enact section 4511.072

## Hearing Schedule



### Tuesday, September 29

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**Senate Rules & Reference (Committee Record)**, (Chr. **Faber, K.**, 466-7584), Majority Conf. Rm., 11:00 am

**House Judiciary (Committee Record)**, (Chr. **Butler, J.**, 644-6008), Rm. 116, 3:30 pm

**SB 161 SEARCH WARRANTS (Oelslager, S.)** To authorize probate judges to issue search warrants. --1st Hearing-Sponsor

**HB 284 RETIREMENT BENEFITS (Dovilla, M., Anielski, M.)** To add extortion and perjury and certain federal offenses to the offenses that may result in forfeiture or termination of public retirement system benefits.-- 1st Hearing-Sponsor

**HB 283 DNA TESTING (Fedor, T.)** To require DNA testing for misdemeanor convictions of voyeurism, public indecency, procuring, soliciting, loitering to engage in soliciting, and prostitution. --1st Hearing-Sponsor

**HB 270 OVERDOSE DEATHS (Dever, J., Pelanda, D.)** To provide that causing the death of another person by an overdose that results from the offender's sale, distribution, dispensation, or administration of a controlled substance or controlled substance analog is a violation of the offense of involuntary manslaughter and to make this provision a strict liability offense. --1st Hearing-Sponsor

### Wednesday, September 30

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**Senate Government Oversight & Reform (Committee Record)**, (Chr. **Coley, B.**, 466-8072), South Hearing Rm., 8:45 am

**HB 5 BUSINESS CASE STUDIES (Kunze, S., Koehler, K.)** To allow the Auditor of State to conduct business case studies regarding the efficiency of local public offices and state agencies, to authorize the Auditor of State to establish a shared equipment service agreement program among political subdivisions, and to specify that a political subdivision that uses the loaned equipment has potential liability for its use under the Political Subdivision Tort Liability Law. --2nd Hearing-Proponent

**SB 204 DRIVERS LICENSE SUSPENSIONS (Seitz, B.)** To make the suspension of an offender's driver's license for a violation of specified drug offenses discretionary rather than mandatory, to authorize a court to terminate a driver's license suspension imposed for specified drug offenses committed out-of-state, to generally authorize a court to terminate a previously imposed mandatory suspension for specified drug offenses, to provide for the discretionary suspension of an offender's driver's license for possessing nitrous oxide in a motor vehicle, and to make consistent the provisions of law governing the ability of a court to grant limited driving privileges. --1st Hearing-Sponsor

**Joint Legislative Task Force on Department of Transportation Issues**, (Chr. **Grossman, C.**, 466-9690;  
Chr. **Manning, G.**, 466-9690), Grant Hearing Rm., 9:00 am

- All testimony on methods and recommendations for increasing the speed on and access to rural highways and freeways in Ohio, as well as saving money on license plates, including specifically a single license plate requirement

**Senate Rules & Reference (Committee Record)**, (Chr. **Faber, K.**, 466-7584), Majority Conf. Rm., 11:00 am

**House Session**, (Chr. **Rosenberger, C.**, 466-3357), House Chamber, 1:30 pm

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

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