



# STATEHOUSE REPORT

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## Unemployment panel hears additional testimony on House Bill 394

A panel formed to explore ways to revamp the state's unemployment compensation system heard testimony this week on a controversial bill to do just that. Opponents of HB 394 raised multiple concerns including:

- Legal Aid Society of Columbus stated that the bill is flawed in its approach to reduce the duration of benefits from the current 26 weeks to an amount of time based on the unemployment rate in the state, as well as the monetary requirements to qualify for benefits.
- The Ohio Alliance for Retired Americans Education Fund disliked a portion of the bill that would reinstate a Social Security offset that was eliminated in 2007.
- Columbus attorney Kristin Seifert Watson spoke out against a provision in the bill that would allow benefits to be denied for a violation of an employer handbook or other circumstances, another that would remove the statute of limitations for collection of fraudulent overpayments and one that would lengthen the amount of time in which the state can collect for non-fraud overpayments.
- Tom Weeks, a former member of the Unemployment Compensation Advisory Council, which would be eliminated through the bill, argued for a similar body to be created to tackle the issue.

### HB 394

#### Unemployment Compensation

**Sponsor:** Rep. Sears

**CCAO Position:** Monitoring

**Status:** House Insurance Committee

#### Key Provisions:

- To reform and restore solvency to the unemployment compensation system.

The panel will meet again on October 20th.

## Law enforcement conference focuses on illegal drug use

Police and deputies from around the state met this week to share strategies aimed at prosecuting drug dealers and helping drug users access treatment. Attorney General Mike DeWine's opening remarks praised local law enforcement officials who have found new ways to deal with Ohio's drug problem, saying that fighting the heroin epidemic requires innovation and early intervention.

A panel of investigators discussed the move toward addressing drug overdose scenes as manslaughter investigations, stressing that it requires detectives to have the crime scene skills of homicide detectives and the drug investigating skills of narcotics detectives. The panel noted that controlling evidence the way you would with a homicide case is key to charging drug dealers with involuntary manslaughter and accessing the drug user's phone can give investigators important information on that person's life and help identify other users and dealers. Matt Donahue, section chief for special prosecutions at the AG's office, stated "We all know how to do it if it's a gunshot wound. In my mind, it's not all that different. It's still a murder scene."

The panel also considered how communities can help more drug users get the treatment they need. Success has been seen with quick response teams who follow up with overdose victims the day after the incident and help them gain access to treatment. These teams can assist with Medicaid enrollment and obtaining needed documents like IDs and birth certificates. Some officers are finding that once the victims get involved in treatment, they begin to share information that may help with other investigations.

One thing that is becoming more and more apparent is that this drug touches every part of our community. Terri Frankel, with the Heroin Partnership Project in Ross County, noted the widespread effects of heroin saying it connects to human trafficking, elder abuse and other issues, and it requires a community-wide effort to combat. "The one thing that heroin did was force us all to the table," she said.

## Drug education study committee talks prevention

The Joint Study Committee on Drug Use Prevention Education heard from Attorney General Mike DeWine this week. Mr. DeWine said that the country as a whole has lacked a focused emphasis on prevention, stating "I think it's been haphazard, it's been whatever makes us feel good, it's whatever we can afford, but I'm not sure it's ever been driven, for a long time at least, by some scientific data and some very real objectives." He added that he's expecting the panel to provide that research-based structure when it recommends innovative ways to deliver drug messaging in schools.

In addition, the committee heard from school representatives and students that funding and the overwhelming focus on end of year testing has hampered many school's abilities to devote the resources



Mike DeWine  
Ohio Attorney General

and time to meaningful drug education. They also noted that having outside help to teach drug prevention, including peers who have struggled with addiction would be very valuable.

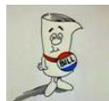
The committee has been charged with examining the status of drug use prevention education in Ohio schools, and issuing recommendations on options for implementing age-appropriate drug education across all grade levels. Before adjourning, the group added another regional meeting to its agenda that will likely take place in early November when the panel is expected to release its report.

## Statehouse, Etc.



**Prescription drug issue to be on next ballot.** A proposal aimed at lowering the cost of prescription drugs will be on the ballot next November, but a report released Monday says it could drive up costs in other areas. The proposal, backed by the AIDS Healthcare Foundation, would require state agencies to pay no more for prescription drugs than the lowest rate paid by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. However a report released by Vorys Health Care Advisors and Health Management Associates says the proposal would be difficult to implement, leading the state to see increased costs in administrative functions while losing supplemental rebate arrangements currently in place with drug manufacturers. The proposal now moves on to the Ballot Board, which will prescribe ballot language before the 2017 election.

## Bills Introduced



### HB 601

#### **MICROBUSINESS** ([PELANDA, D.](#))

To create a statutory definition of "microbusiness."

#### **Code Sections**

Am. 166.50

### HB 602

#### **DIGITAL ASSETS** ([CUPP, R.](#), [REZABEK, J.](#))

To adopt the Revised Uniform Fiduciary Access to Digital Assets Act.

#### **Code Sections**

Am. 1337.60 and to enact sections 1337.571, 2137.01, 2137.02, 2137.03, 2137.04, 2137.05, 2137.06, 2137.07, 2137.08, 2137.09, 2137.10, 2137.11, 2137.12, 2137.13, 2137.14, 2137.15, 2137.16, 2137.17, and 2137.18