

OARC Transportation Directors Legislative Update – April 26, 2024

- In the March Primary, 12 of the so called “Gang of 22”, the 22 Republicans that joined with 32 Democrats to make Jason Stephens, Speaker, had Primary challenges. Of those 12, 4 of the incumbents lost their primaries (Pavliga, Carruther, Hillyer, and Cross), along with incumbent Democrat Rep Elliott Forhan. This has not resolved anything relative to the looming battle for Speaker next GA between Speaker Jason Stephens and Sen President Matt Huffman, who is term limited in the Senate and running for a House seat.
- There are two major issues looming in the GA that need to be addressed before they recess again for the summer, passage of a Capital Appropriations Bill, and allocation of the \$700 million one-time Strategic Investment Fund included in HB 33 (Biennial Operating Budget). The House passed the bonded indebtedness portion of a Capital Bill (bonded funding for brick and mortar projects at public entities), and appropriated \$350 million of the One Time Strategic Investment Fund, but the Senate has yet to even begin taking action on either. Senate Finance Chair Matt Dolan said the Senate will begin deliberations on both late April, which will be their recommendations. A committee of conference will then meet to resolve differences between the two Chambers. Neither chamber has released any information relative to the size of the “Community Projects” portion of the Capital Appropriations bill (a list of projects that has not yet been released), which in years past has been between \$120 - \$180 million. Projects to be considered will come from lists various regions across the state have submitted.
- Due to the lack of activity because of their pre-Primary recess, none of the bills we are monitoring for OARC have had any further deliberations and therefore nothing new to report. Key bills we’re working on include: HB 267 (Remote Meeting Authority) which has passed the House and awaiting Senate Committee deliberations, HB 64 (Eminent Domain), HB 215 (County Engineer Requirements), HB 370 (ODOT Maintenance in Municipalities), and HB 488 (Re-Enter Midwest Passenger Rail Compact).
- Recreational Marijuana - We are monitoring the release of rules by the Cannabis Control Commission, that is mandated to promulgate rules relative to the program’s operations per the passage of the initiated statute last November. Per the initiated statute, the program must be up and running 9 months after the election, which puts legal sale of recreational marijuana beginning in September. Currently, the bulk of the Commission’s rules mirror the same requirements as for medical marijuana, including grow sites, cultivation, testing, processing, and dispensing. The General Assembly, who back in December held hearings on separate bills in the House & Senate to place additional “guardrails” around the initiated statute, failed to act so the Commission is moving forward with their rule packages. It is still possible, and likely, that GA will come back in the Fall to clarify several aspects of the program’s operations, one of which is how will the tax revenue collected on recreational marijuana be dispersed.

Kevin L. Futryk
Partner
Government Advantage Group, LLP
17 S. High Street, Suite 750
Columbus, Ohio 43215

(614) 221-7157 (Office)
(614) 827-5698 (Cell)