

Week in review

September 16, 2011 -- Our top "4" subjects you should know

1. Ohio House approves new Congressional district map

The Ohio House held session this week to vote on two pieces of legislation, House Bills 318 and 319. House Bill 318, which moves next year's primary election from March to May, was approved by a 63-29 vote. An attempt to add an emergency clause in the bill did not receive the necessary two-thirds majority for inclusion. Therefore, the bill will not be in effect for the December 7 filing deadline for the March primary.

Republicans also passed House Bill 319, which outlines Congressional districts for the next decade. The **new map** unveiled this week, places U.S. Representatives Dennis Kucinich (D- Cleveland) and Marcy Kaptur (D- Toledo) in the same district. Representatives Steve Austria (R- Beavercreek) and Michael Turner (R- Dayton) would also be grouped in the same district and under the map, Representatives Betty Sutton (D- Chardon) and Jim Renacci (R- Alliance) would face one another in an election. The map also creates a new district in Franklin County.

The map appears to lump Democrats into four of the 16 districts. Democrats decried the map as "a complete sham" and Democratic Party Chairman Chris Redfern said the party is weighing its options for a legal challenge and a referendum campaign. House Speaker William Batchelder (R- Medina) said the threatened referendum could result in a federal court drawing the congressional map, or deciding what to do while the map was put on hold for voters to decide.

Both bills now go to the Republican-controlled Ohio Senate for consideration. The chamber is expected to move quickly on approval.

2. PUCO hears oral arguments on proposed tariff

The Public Utilities Commission of Ohio (PUCO) heard oral arguments from interested parties on the PUCO staff's proposed economic development tariff on September 14, 2011. The proposal is an electric tariff that Ohio's electric utilities would adopt to incentivize economic development in the state. New and existing Ohio businesses that make at least \$50 million in capital investment, meet job creation or retention benchmarks, with at least \$5 million in payroll increases or have very high electric usage in relation to their operating costs, could elect to receive electric service under the terms of the proposed tariff.

Witnesses suggested numerous modifications to the tariff requirements. Among them was that only energy-intensive companies should be considered for the tariff. Some witnesses felt that companies should have to prove that without the tariff, they would not have located in Ohio. Others felt that the job-creation and capital investment thresholds to qualify for the tariff rates were too high.

Todd Snitchler, PUCO Chairman, said he was highly impressed by the quality of discussion during oral arguments and that going forward the Commission will consider the information presented to arrive at a decision. The tariff proposal is subject to change and is not final until a vote by the Commission.

3. Cleveland legislator joins Senate leadership

Senator Tom Patton (R- Strongsville) was chosen by his peers to serve as Majority Floor Leader, the number three leadership post. He replaces former Senator Jimmy Stewart who resigned his seat in June to be the President of the Ohio Gas Association.

Patton currently chairs the Senate Highways & Transportation Committee. He is the only Northeast Ohio Senator on the majority leadership team.

4. Grendell appointed to judgeship

Senator Tim Grendell (R- Chesterland) has been appointed by Governor Kasich to fill a vacancy on the Geauga County Common Pleas Court's Juvenile/Probate Division. Grendell must run for the seat next November in order to fill out the unexpired term that ends in February 2015. He will take the bench on September 21.

Grendell has served in the legislature since 2001. He currently chairs the Senate Judiciary-Criminal Justice Committee. Senate President Tom Niehaus (R- New Richmond) said this week that a replacement would not be selected until after the Apportionment Board finalizes new legislative districts. Grendell is the seventh Senator to leave the legislature since the 2010 election.

Separately, House Republicans selected Louis Terhar to fill the vacancy left by former Representative Robert Mecklenborg (R- Cincinnati). Terhar is a retired naval officer, adjunct business professor, and former CEO of several private sector companies. His wife is the State Board of Education President, Debe Terhar.

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