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Legislative Update

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MONDAY, MARCH 23 2009

CASINO BACKERS TO RESUBMIT PETITION LANGUAGE AFTER ATTORNEY GENERAL'S REJECTION

Supporters of a fall ballot issue to authorize casinos in Ohio's major cities vowed Monday to refile petition summary language after Attorney General Richard Cordray rejected the original plan.

Mr. Cordray said in a letter to the Ohio Jobs and Growth Committee that the summary language was not "a fair and truthful statement of the proposed amendment" because of problems related to the tax code and the exact locations of the four proposed casinos in Cincinnati, Cleveland, Columbus and Toledo.

Committee spokesman Bob Tenenbaum said an additional 1,000 signatures would be collected and the summary language tweaked to address the AG's concerns. No changes will be made to the basic plan, he said.

"We will be making the necessary changes and resubmitting as soon as possible," Mr. Tenenbaum said. "It was not the intention to exempt casino patrons from state and local income taxes."

Mr. Cordray's letter to the committee stated that it appeared the language would exempt casino winnings from taxation. Mr. Tenenbaum said it was a matter of "interpretation" that would be clarified.

The AG also found issue with the language regarding the proposed casino locales.

"In order for the summary to be a fair and truthful representation of the proposed amendment, I believe that your summary must include a fuller description of the exact location of the casinos, since your amendment has already predetermined those locations by providing specified parcel numbers," the letter states.

Mr. Cordray noted that it's not unusual for petition summary language to be rejected. Since 2004, the office rejected 16 of 44 submissions, and in many cases the proposals were ultimately certified, he said.

The petition must clear the AG and the Ohio Ballot Board before the committee may start collecting signatures to qualify for the fall ballot.

BILL INTRODUCTION PACE PICKS UP IN LEGISLATURE

After a relatively slow start, the General Assembly's bill-making machine is now running at full speed, churning out legislation this month that impacts a range of issues including school nutrition, animal cruelty, state employee salaries, firearms and amphibians.

Rep. Dan Dodd (D-Licking Twp.) proposed legislation that would establish the healthy farms and healthy schools grant to provide funding to schools for nutrition and agricultural education programs for kindergarteners (HB 68).

Sen. Kevin Coughlin (R-Cuyahoga Falls) touted his measure that would require the state to maintain a website to enable citizens to track agency expenditures, map the distribution of tax credits and monitor state employee compensation (SB 78).

"There is a lot of money flying around Columbus and Ohio taxpayers should not have to be lobbyists or politicians to know where their dollars are being spent, particularly at a time when billions in new stimulus dollars from the federal government are flowing into the state," the gubernatorial candidate said in a statement. "Senate Bill 78 would create a one-stop shop for average Ohioans to keep tabs on the use of state resources."

Sen. Tom Sawyer (D-Akron) introduced a bill to establish an electronic insurance verification system that he said would provide instant insurance status verification to law enforcement while protecting motorists' personal information and generating revenue (SB 68).

"This represents an opportunity to realize substantial new revenues without raising taxes," he said, estimating the system would collect more than \$500 million dollars for the state during the first year of implementation. "Without this insurance verification system in Ohio, we are giving money away to other states."

Sen. Nina Turner (D-Cleveland) introduced legislation that would prohibit the Division of Liquor Control from issuing liquor permits to vendors located within five hundred feet from a school, church, library, playground, or park (SB 62).

TWO POTENTIAL BUSINESS EXPANSIONS DEPEND ON INCENTIVES; SOLAR ENERGY, MOVIE PRODUCTION FIRMS EYE OHIO DEVELOPMENTS

Two firms in divergent industries recently announced plans to develop their businesses in Ohio pending agreement on incentives.

Spain-based Isofoton, a manufacturer of solar energy modules, recently took the first step toward development of a production center in Ohio.

The company announced the signing of a "cooperation agreement" with the state in which "both sides commit mutually to cooperate in the implementation of a new Isofoton production center in the state. This decision is contingent upon negotiation and approval of incentives, site location and other due diligence."

If the company's plans come to fruition, the new "photovoltaic module production center," the first in the U.S. for a Spanish solar company, would assemble cells produced in Malaga, Spain.

The company said the next step in the process would be to identify "strategic utility partners" to develop its U.S. business plans.

"We are tremendously excited that Isofoton has committed to expanding in Ohio," Gov. Ted Strickland said in a news release issued by the company. "This commitment demonstrates our globally-recognized research capabilities, the state's forward-looking energy policy and our manufacturing strength."

The company said the estimated implementation date for its plant, with an estimated production capacity of 60 MW photovoltaic modules, is between 2010 and 2011.

"The company acknowledges this state as a key partner to boost its business in a market as important as the U.S. and is working also with the advice and cooperation of MAPA, a strategic consulting firm focusing on the establishment of Spanish companies in the U.S.," Isofoton announced.

Separately, the company that inspired rival proposals for filmmaker tax credits in the House and Senate has agreed with the Cleveland on a free lease of space in the city's convention center.

New York-based Nehst Studios, under a one-year, rent-free lease, plans to develop a 17,000-square-foot production center to make movies and television shows, *The (Cleveland) Plain Dealer* reported.

The company's plans, however, are contingent on the passage of a moviemaker tax credit, and the Democrat-controlled House and GOP-run Senate have passed starkly different versions.

The Senate bill features a \$100 million transferable tax credit program (SB 9) and the House proposes a maximum \$20 million in refundable tax credits (HB 6).

Speaker Armond Budish (D-Beachwood) last week welcomed the announcement of the tentative Nehst lease and said he would be working with the Senate on moving the tax credit legislation forward.

"This is certainly encouraging news as we look for creative solutions to help Ohio's economy recover," the speaker said. "I look forward to working with the Ohio Senate on turning this bill into law and continuing our efforts to bring new opportunities to Ohio."

TUESDAY, MARCH 24 2009

DEMOCRAT SUGGESTS DELAY IN PUBLIC SAFETY CHANGE; GOP INSISTS SEAT BELT, SPEED CAM ITEMS OUT OF TRANSPORTATION BUDGET

A House Democrat suggested a two-year delay Tuesday in a Senate Republican plan to move the Department of Public Safety out of Gov. Ted Strickland's pending transportation budget, the one GOP change House Speaker Armond Budish found most disappointing.

Senate Republicans, meanwhile, indicated their removal of two other administration proposals - dealing with seat belt law enforcement and use of automated cameras to catch speeders - was non-negotiable.

The first House-Senate conference committee since 1994 not controlled by Republicans convened briefly for its first public meeting Tuesday.

It will try to resolve differences between the chambers over the governor's two-year transportation budget (HB 2).

As it passed the House, the measure included a combined \$7.6 billion for the Department of Transportation and the Department of Public Safety. Also included was appropriation authority for a handful of other agencies to spend about \$2.2 billion in federal economic stimulus money.

As it left the Senate, the bill contained about \$6.1 billion for ODOT, along with the federal stimulus appropriation. The entire public safety budget of about \$1.5 billion was removed, with an expression of legislative intent to include it in the main operating budget (HB 1) still pending in the House.

Rep. Peter Ujvagi (D-Toledo), chairman of the conference panel, acknowledged the Senate view that the DPS transfer was logical because the agency no longer was funded with gasoline tax revenue.

"The problem is what do you do with that three-month transition. What was it in the last time? It was in the transportation bill," Rep. Ujvagi said in an interview.

"If we set it up this year so that in the next biennium the funding will be considered in the operating budget, then it makes sense. I think that's the most reasonable alternative," he said.

"I think it's a major mistake, a major miscalculation for us to just simply say, 'Well, we're going to wait on this until the operating budget'. Because all of a sudden ... you have three lost months of funding, and three lost months of potential safety services to the citizens," Rep. Ujvagi said.

Senate President Pro Tem Tom Niehaus (R-New Richmond) said moving public safety to the operating budget was not a bargaining chip.

"(It) just didn't make sense from our standpoint in treating (one) agency completely separate from every other agency when their reason for being in that transportation budget to begin with is no longer there, since the gas tax is not how they're getting funded," he told reporters.

Sen. Niehaus said Republicans also "have serious concerns" about a series of fee increases proposed in the DPS budget. Included is \$106 million a year in higher vehicle registration and related charges intended to offset a funding shortfall for the State Highway Patrol.

"At the end of the day what we're going to be concerned with are the improvements that we can make to the bill that are going to be most beneficial to the residents of Ohio. Does the average person care whether the Department of Public Safety is in the operating budget versus the transportation budget? Probably not," he said.

"It's an item that clearly, by taking it out, we sent the signal both to the House and the administration that this is a serious issue that we want to take a hard look at," Sen. Niehaus said.

The Senate also removed Gov. Strickland's proposals to make the state's seat belt law a primary offense, and to create a pilot project for using automated cameras to cite speeders in construction zones along interstate highways.

Under the governor's proposal, violators would face civil penalties of up to \$250, plus an unspecified administrative fee.

Those items appear to be deal breakers for the Senate.

"We have communicated to the House and the administration that speed cameras and ... primary enforcement of seat belts are not issues that we're willing to talk about. We have no support in our caucus for either one of those issues," Sen. Niehaus said.

Rep. Ujvagi said seat belts and speed cameras were safety factors that deserve serious consideration.

"I respect the fact that there is a philosophical, a libertarian kind of issue here as well," he said.

"The fact of the matter is with the seat belt bill the primary offense is the rule of the land in the vast majority of the states ... but from everything I can tell there's a very strong negative position on it in the Senate," Rep. Ujvagi said.

"I don't think they're the more substantive sticking points, but I think they are the ones that have generated the most emotion ... or philosophical difference, I guess, is the other diplomatic term," he said.

He said the two parties are "hopefully" closer on Gov. Strickland's proposal to start railroad passenger trains running on a route from Cincinnati to Cleveland via Dayton and Columbus.

"We're very pleased with the Senate and the consideration that they've given to rail," Rep. Ujvagi said.

He said the most important part of the question was how to balance "appropriate legislative oversight" with the process of applying for a share of about \$8 billion in federal stimulus money available for rail passenger projects.

The House proposed allowing the Controlling Board to release any funds received, while the Senate wants the General Assembly to provide appropriation authority.

Sen. Niehaus said the GOP feels "very strongly" about the need for legislative input on proceeding with rail service through Amtrak.

"We're not blessing passenger rail. We're simply saying let's go out and get the money, but we want the legislature to be involved in how that money is spent, if at all," he said.

Also in dispute: the Senate decision to restore a full \$54 million payment to fuel dealers and retailers who collect the state's gasoline tax.

Chairman Ujvagi said the administration had proposed using most of the money instead to support \$200 million of infrastructure construction as part of the state's economic stimulus package.

"If we don't have some of the resources we're not going to be able to proceed with that, and so that knocks out \$200 million of jobs in Ohio and new infrastructure that would be built with that money," he said.

Speaker Budish (D-Beachwood) was scheduled to meet with Senate President Bill Harris (R-Ashland), who was back at the Statehouse Tuesday for the first time since a fall earlier this year on ice outside a downtown hotel.

Rep. Budish said he was "most disappointed" that the Senate had removed the entire spending plan for public safety, of which the highway patrol is a division, from the transportation budget.

"I have some great fears that by doing so we not only jeopardize the safety of Ohioans but we may end up costing the people of Ohio some significant dollars," he told reporters.

Elevating the seat belt law to primary enforcement would entitle the state to a one-time \$26.7 million federal highway safety grant.

From 1995 through 2008, Republicans held a majority on the six-member conference committees because the GOP controlled both the House and Senate. The balance changed in 2009 after Democrats regained majority status in the House.

Votes of two House members and two Senate members are needed to approve an item in a conference committee.

Legislators face a March 31 deadline for enacting the ODOT budget in order for it to take effect with the July 1 start of the new fiscal year.

Under the current session schedule, the Senate could not vote on a conference report - if one is reached - until Tuesday.

However, Sen. Niehaus said the chamber is considering the possibility of holding a voting session Thursday in the event progress is made.

"We have alerted our members that it's possible we could have a voting session on Thursday, but no decision has been made on that," he said.

HOUSE PASSES BUDGETS FOR BUREAU OF WORKERS' COMPENSATION, INDUSTRIAL COMMISSION

The House on Tuesday sent to the Senate mostly non-controversial, continuation budgets for the Bureau of Workers' Compensation and its administrative claims review panel, the Ohio Industrial Commission.

The chamber also overwhelmingly rejected, by a 6-91 vote, Senate amendments to the two-year transportation budget (HB 2). The move, combined with the upper chamber's later insistence on its changes, officially sends the package of non-GRF state and federal funding appropriations to conference committee. (*See separate story*)

The BWC bill (HB 15) passed 90-8 and the OIC budget cleared the House 96-2.

The bureau's \$657 million, two-year spending plan, funded through employer premiums, had already been endorsed by the House Finance and Insurance committees as well as the Workers' Compensation Council. Likewise for OIC's premium-funded \$123 million biennium budget.

Minority Republicans again tried unsuccessfully with amendments to: prohibit the modification or elimination of the BWC Drug-Free Workplace Program; require that changes to group-rated premiums be announced a year in advance of implementation, and; bar the bureau from charging an employers experience when a third party causes an accident. All of the proposals were tabled along party lines.

Rep. Ross McGregor (R-Springfield) said the drug-free incentive initiative has gone a long way toward "creating a culture of safety" in Ohio workplaces.

Rep. Dan Dodd (D-Licking Twp.) said that proposal and the others would unduly take away the BWC Board of Directors' discretion in how to best manage its operations. He suggested the same in regards to the rate-setting change, offered by Rep. Robert Mecklenborg (R-Cincinnati), adding that it needed vetting in separate legislation.

Mr. Mecklenborg also offered the third-party liability language, saying of current practice in that regard, "It's not fair. It's not right and it unduly penalizes employers in this great state."

Rep. Dodd said that although the amendment was altered since offered in committee, "There are a lot of questions that are raised" with the proposal, such as the definition of "negligence." He reiterated an offer to separately consider the matter in the Insurance Committee.

COUNTIES, OTHER LOCAL ENTITIES SEEK RELIEF IN BUDGET FROM BUSINESS PROPERTY TAX CUT PLANS

Counties and other local government entities added another funding request Tuesday to the ever-expanding list under consideration by a legislative budget panel.

Representatives of the Coalition of Local Governments & Services, which includes counties, libraries, townships, fire departments and others, asked for \$11.2 million to cover the loss of revenue related to the phase-out of the tangible personal property tax.

The elimination of the tax on equipment, machinery and inventory was part of a systemic overhaul enacted in 2005. The last six months of the upcoming biennium covered in the budget measure (HB 1) starts the end of a "hold harmless" period for the entities that have benefited from the locally distributed property tax revenue.

Once the hold-harmless period is phased out completely in 2019, the coalition said, county governments would be out \$273 million a year, municipalities \$92 million, townships \$71 million and other special taxing districts \$56 million.

Former Rep. Dan Troy, a Lake County Commissioner and past president of the County Commissioners Association of Ohio, said the \$11.2 million request would continue the entities' full reimbursement of the lost TPP tax through the FY 2010-2011 biennium.

When policymakers conceived the phase-out, the theory was that a growing economy would help offset the revenue loss over time, he told the House Finance & Appropriations Committee. "Obviously, we're not seeing that right now."

Mr. Troy said the only alternative counties have to make up the funding is through increased property or sales taxes.

The loss of TPP tax revenue hurts all entities - some more than others depending on the business property wealth of the areas they serve - that fund their operations with property taxes.

David Jennings, director of the Akron-Summit County Public Library, said the looming TPP tax hit comes at a time when funds are already squeezed under the state's revenue sharing agreement with local governments - by an estimated 7-10% this year - and public libraries are seeing record use by patrons.

Meanwhile, state funding for public libraries has dropped from \$496 million in 2001 to \$419 million in 2009, Mr. Jennings said. "So, as you ponder the next biennium budget, it is important to note the erosion of public library funding in Ohio."

Assistant Fire Chief Robert Bates, of the Madison Township Fire Department in Groveport and representing the Ohio Fire Chiefs Association, said the loss of TPP revenue "will impact almost every unit of local government and levy funded agency in the state of Ohio." Depending on the entity and its location, he said revenue losses will range from 3.5%-25.8% once the hold-harmless period ends.

"When fully implemented, our department will lose just over \$1.2 million representing over 18% of our 2007 budget and requiring an additional levy of 2.1 mills to make up this loss," Mr. Bates said. "The total funding loss for Madison Township is in excess of \$1.7 million."

Suzanne Dulaney, associate CEO of the Ohio Association of County Behavioral Health Authorities, said alcohol, drug addiction and mental health boards statewide stand to lose more than \$25 million a year once the phase-out is complete.

While local levies currently generate about \$325 million a year for such services, she said, "If Ohio does not finish the business of tax reform by finding a permanent revenue replacement mechanism, the impact will be devastating to many communities."

"The average annual cost of community mental health treatment is \$7,400 and the annual cost for addiction treatment is \$1,200," Ms. Dulaney said. "That represents a lot of lost services in a time when demand is increasing."

Finance Chairman Rep. Vernon Sykes (D-Akron) called the coalition's concerns and request "very appropriate" in the context of the budget, while asking whether the group had a position on whether a tax increase should be pursued.

Ms. Dulaney said the coalition did not have a unified position on the revenue source for keeping the entities whole.

PICKENS: DOMESTIC NATURAL GAS SUPPLIES CAN MEET NEEDS, CUT COSTS; OSU PRESIDENT TO LEAD NATIONAL ENERGY RESEARCH EFFORT

The United States can cut its dependence on foreign oil by relying more heavily on domestic natural gas supplies and other new technologies, a prominent oilman said Tuesday.

Speaking at an energy town hall meeting organized by AEP Ohio, T. Boone Pickens said domestic supplies of other fuels are sufficient to serve as a "bridge" for the next 20-25 years until new energy sources are developed.

Mr. Pickens added that natural gas can be used to power vehicles at a lower cost than oil.

AEP chairman, president and CEO Michael Morris said Mr. Pickens awakened the nation on the issue of relying on foreign fuel sources. "The whole concept of continually sending hard earned American dollars overseas...is something that we can address," he said.

He raised concern that when the economy turns around, oil demand will increase, helping push gas prices to levels where \$4 per gallon gas will seem like a bargain. "I think America has an opportunity to move forward right now," he said.

Mr. Pickens said Americans have been discussing the need to move away from foreign supply for decades, but said that talk hasn't produced any notable difference. "Somebody's got to blow a whistle and stop this," he said. "Our security is going to be totally at risk."

Mr. Pickens said he's received "incredible support" for his plan since launching it in July, when East Coast gasoline prices topped \$4 per gallon.

"We're foolish to continue to do this because we don't have to," he said. "The security question has not been minimized by the price drop."

Among other things, Mr. Morris said plug-in hybrid electric vehicles can help cut foreign oil demand. "It would be silly for this country to not take advantage of that opportunity," he said.

Even with improvements in the electric hybrid market, he said Americans need to be sure to focus on the importance of domestic development. "We can't do away with foreign oil and replace it with Chinese batteries," Mr. Morris said.

PASSED IN THEHOUSE

HB 15 BWC BUDGET (Sykes) To create the Deputy Inspector General for the Bureau of Workers' Compensation and Industrial Commission Fund; to make other changes to the Workers' Compensation Law; to make appropriations for the Bureau of Workers' Compensation for the biennium beginning July 1, 2009, and ending June 30, 2011; and to provide authorization and conditions for the operation of the Bureau's programs.

90-8

HB 16 INDUSTRIAL COMMISSION BUDGET (Sykes) To make appropriations for the Industrial Commission for the biennium beginning July 1, 2009, and ending June 30, 2011, and to provide authorization and conditions for the operation of Commission programs.

96-2 (J. Adams & Bubp)

HOUSE REFUSES TO CONCUR IN SENATE AMENDMENTS

HB 2 TRANSPORTATION BUDGET (Ujvagi) To make appropriations for programs related to transportation and public safety for the biennium beginning July 1, 2009, and ending June 30, 2011, and to provide authorization and conditions for the operation of those programs.

6-91 (Conferees: Reps. Sykes, Ujvagi & McGregor)

HOUSE COMMITTEE HEARING

Finance & Appropriations

HB 1 STATE BUDGET (Sykes) To make operating appropriations for the biennium beginning July 1, 2009, and ending June 30, 2011, and to provide authorization and conditions for the operation of state programs. (Public testimony on issues related to General Government)

CONTINUED

Commerce & Labor

HB 37 COMPETITIVE BIDDING (Dyer) To require the Department of Administrative Services to maintain a web site database including apparent low bidders who failed to be awarded a contract because they were found not to be "responsible," and to require public entities to conduct investigations when apparent low bidders are suspected of failing or fail to meet the "responsible" prong of the "responsive and responsible" competitive bidding threshold. (1st Hearing-Sponsor)

CONTINUED

Rep. Dyer presented proponent testimony, saying the bill would create a database owners could check to make sure a contractor is telling the truth about their responsibility forms, he said. It would apply to those found not responsible enough to be given a contract, even though they are a low bidder and does not apply to non-responsive contractors, he said.

"This bill gives another tool to public entities to protect our precious tax dollars from avoidable legal fees and construction claims," Mr. Dyer said.

Rep. Watchman asked Mr. Dyer to explain the definition of a non-responsible bidder. Mr. Dyer said responsibility means the contractor could handle the project financially. If owners decide the contractor cannot handle the job, and is therefore non-responsible, they choose the next lowest bidder, he said. They are then supposed to inform subsequent owners that the contractor is non-responsible, however, this rarely happens.

Rep. Uecker asked Mr. Dyer to clarify the investigation required by the bill. Mr. Dyer said currently, no investigation into claims of non-responsible contractors is mandatory. The bill says a small investigation is needed in order to clarify the contractor's situation. "Its more of a check on what they are revealing on their responsibility form," he said.

Rep. Patton asked if the bill includes out-of-state contractors. Mr. Dyer said he believes the language includes all contractors, but he will look into it.

CONFEREES NAMED IN THE SENATE

HB 2 TRANSPORTATION BUDGET (Ujvagi) To make appropriations for programs related to transportation and public safety for the biennium beginning July 1, 2009, and ending June 30, 2011, and to provide authorization and conditions for the operation of those programs.

Sens. Patton, Buehrer & Turner

INTRODUCED IN THE SENATE

SB 85 WATER TANKS (Stewart) To authorize certain political subdivisions to contract for engineering, repair, sustainability, water quality management, and maintenance of a water storage tank through a professional service contract under specified conditions. Am. & En. 9.29, 6101.161, 6103.101, 6115.201, and 6119.101

SENATE COMMITTEE HEARING

Insurance, Commerce & Labor

SB 66 VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS (Faber) To provide health insurance benefits to dependents of volunteer firefighters killed in the line of duty. (1st Hearing-Sponsor)

CONTINUED

Sen. Faber offered sponsor testimony on the proposal to provide health insurance for dependants of volunteer firefighters killed in the line of duty.

While the dependents full-time firefighters are currently covered in the event of a fatality, the dependents of volunteer firefighters are not, he said. The measure would offer coverage only when dependents are not eligible under another plan.

"This legislation will affirm our commitment to taking care of the firefighters who put their lives on the line everyday," he said.

In response to Chairman Buehrer, who asked who would pay for the coverage, Sen. Faber said the state would pay the employer portion and dependent would pay the employee portion.

"So we're in effect bringing them under the state umbrella?" Chairman Buehrer said. Sen. Faber said it would, anticipating minimal costs.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 25 2009

PUBLIC SAFETY SPENDING, PAYMENTS TO FUEL DEALERS SEEN AS MAJOR OBSTACLES TO TRANSPORTATION BUDGET

Funding for the Department of Public Safety and the proposed end of payments to fuel dealers and retailers emerged Wednesday as major items of dispute as behind the scenes negotiations continued on Gov. Ted Strickland's proposed \$7.6 billion transportation budget.

A six-member conference committee to which the two-year spending plan (HB 2) was assigned met briefly at 8:48 a.m., and recessed to 3 p.m. The start time was subsequently pushed back to 7 p.m., but the panel convened then only to recess until 8:30 a.m. Thursday, in Statehouse Room 116.

Senate President Pro Tem Tom Niehaus (R-New Richmond) said at mid-afternoon that work on resolving disputed issues continued with the governor and other conferees. Among the unresolved matters he identified: the Senate's proposed transfer of the budget for the Department of Public Safety - along with \$150 million worth of new motor vehicle related fee increases - to the main operating budget.

Separate sources indicated the public safety and fuel payment items were believed to be the major remaining stumbling blocks.

Rep. Peter Ujvagi (D-Toledo), the conference chairman, said Wednesday night that "everything" remains on the table for discussion.

"We're working on amendments that hopefully we'll be able to bring forward very, very quickly. Those are some of the issues that are still out there," he said when asked about the public safety and fuel items. "Some issues I think we've been able to develop amendments that bring us to a point where we'll be able to propose to the other side that hopefully will be acceptable, and they're doing the same thing. Everything's still on the table. Some things we're closer on than others."

ADVOCATES, ANALYST PUSH FOR TAX INCREASES IN BUDGET PLAN; SURVEY FINDS SUPPORT FOR MORE REVENUE TO SAVE SERVICES

The push for tax hikes in the biennium budget advanced on two fronts Wednesday, as advocates argued that more state revenue is in order given the curtailment of some services and program cuts Gov. Ted Strickland has proposed in his \$54.3 billion plan.

Policy Matters Ohio Research Director Zach Schiller prompted a spirited debate with testimony at the House Finance & Appropriations Committee that challenged the sustainability of the 2005 tax system overhaul as well as the argument that some \$1 billion in business tax cuts under that plan have kept Ohio's economy out of deeper water.

Later in the day, the Campaign to Protect Ohio's Future, a coalition of government service advocacy groups, released the results of a survey indicating Ohio voters would support increased taxes to protect government services.

Up to this point at least, such arguments have yet to gain traction with Democratic Gov. Strickland, who has said repeatedly that a tax increase during such dismal economic times would be counterproductive, and Republicans who control the Senate and have argued instead on the side of tax cuts and reduced state spending.

Reiterating the findings of past Policy Matters Ohio studies on the issue, Mr. Schiller told lawmakers that the so-called "tax reform" plan enacted four years ago has failed in its basic premise of encouraging business development as evidenced by the fact that Ohio still lags other states in that regard.

"Ohio needs more revenue to pay for today's needs and provide a stable source of funding in the future," he said.

Mr. Schiller also took issue with Gov. Strickland's tax breaks in the biennium budget (HB 1), saying they would "ratify a major change in philosophy in Ohio's economic development efforts" because of proposed changes to Job Creation and Job Retention tax credit programs that would serve to expand the programs by removing certain restrictions.

Additionally, he objected to the New Markets Tax Credit piggyback to the federal program, championed by House Speaker Armond Budish (D-Beachwood), calling it "a misguided effort" because other states would respond in kind.

Mr. Schiller said much the same in regards to the 2005 tax restructuring, which he called on legislators to substantially reverse by, among other things: restoring the 7.5% top income tax rate for people making more than \$200,000 a year; restoring the corporate franchise tax; bolstering the commercial activity tax; and eliminating "tax loopholes" detailed in the state's biennial Tax Expenditure Report.

His comments prompted some adverse commentary from Republican panelists including Rep. Ross McGregor (R-Springfield), an executive in his family-owned automotive part manufacturing business.

If the legislature were to adopt Mr. Schiller's proposals, the lawmaker asked, "Who should I have to go back to my shop and fire?" He disagreed with the negative assessment of the tax reform's benefits to the state, saying "the benefits are the people I'm still able to employ" as a result of the tax code changes that, among other things, eliminated the business tangible personal property tax.

Without such business tax breaks, Mr. McGregor added, "The landscape would be devastation in the state of Ohio for manufacturing."

Rep. Barbara Sears (R-Sylvania) said of Mr. Schiller's contention that state tax policy isn't a major component of business location decisions, "I'd like to seriously disagree with you" based on first-hand knowledge, namely a drop-off in clients at her employee benefit and financial planning firm.

"We are losing people all the time," she said.

Mr. Schiller's suggestion of a full statutory review of tax expenditures, along with his other contentions, did garner some agreement among Democrats on the panel.

Responding to a question from Rep. Michael Skindell (D-Lakewood), the witness questioned the tax overhaul approach of eliminating the corporate franchise tax, likened to "Swiss cheese" because of the numerous exemptions that were in place. He said the state should have instead closed those "loopholes" in the tax and retained it along with the CAT.

Tax And Services Survey: Members of the Campaign to Protect Ohio's Future said at a later news conference that a survey the group commissioned with Hart Research Associates out of Washington, D.C. shows most Ohio voters would be amenable to tax changes such as those proposed by Policy Matters Ohio if it meant that government service cuts could be avoided.

Pollster Guy Molyneux said voters favored a "balanced approach" to the state's budget crunch and that state and local taxes were at the bottom of a list of concerns topped by the economy (62%), education (33%), government spending 29% and health care (26%). Only 14% of respondents said taxes were their chief concern.

"People are not very worried about tax rates in Ohio right now," Mr. Molyneux said.

Among the key findings of the telephone survey, conducted March 6-9 among 602 registered voters and with a margin of error at plus- or minus-4.1 percentage points:

- 57% favor a budget proposal that would "roll back some recent cuts in state income taxes, increase income taxes on those with incomes over \$200,000, and increase some business taxes to avoid service cuts."
- Most voters said income taxes (57%) and sales taxes (61%) are "just about right or too low to support public services," while 51% said their property taxes are too high.
- More than half of the respondents said it was "totally unacceptable" to: cut social services affecting abused and neglected children; cut funding for Pre-K through 12th grade schools; eliminate services for people with mental illness.

"These findings show that Ohioans want a balanced approach to help families that are struggling to make ends meet in this crisis," Campaign Co-Chairwoman Gayle Channing Tenenbaum said.

"The public realizes that failure to maintain adequate funding in key areas would take away help that people need. This would work against the goal of creating jobs and strengthening the economy."

CASINO BACKERS SUBMIT NEW PETITION SUMMARY

A committee pushing a constitutional amendment that would allow four full-service casinos in Ohio Wednesday filed new summary language that, if approved, would allow backers to begin collecting petition signatures.

The Ohio Jobs and Growth Committee filed the new language with Attorney General Richard Cordray days after he rejected the first proposed petition language.

The new language provides details on the locations of the proposed casinos, removes tax-related references to casino patrons and specifies that the amendment wouldn't impact Ohio Lottery or bingo games, backers said.

The attorney general rejected the first proposal on Monday, citing concerns with language regarding taxes and locations.

ENERGY EFFICIENCY INVESTMENT YIELDS HUGE SAVINGS ON ELECTRICITY BILLS, BOON FOR JOB CREATION, REPORT SAYS

The day after a report found great promise for Ohio's fledgling renewable energy industry, policymakers touted a study showing energy efficiency has huge economic development potential for the state. Speaking at an event to publicize the American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy study released Wednesday, Rep. Matt Szollosi (D-Oregon) said energy efficiency industry could benefit the environment and the economy in Ohio.

"Energy efficiency is definitely our cheapest, cleanest, most readily available resource," said the speaker pro tem. "When this economic recovery does occur... you're going to see Ohio is very well-poised in this area to take on the jobs of the future."

By investing in energy efficiency strategies, Ohio could create more than 32,000 net new jobs by 2025, including positions for designing, installing and operating the technology, according to the ACEEE report. Implementing the energy efficiency policies outlined in the study would reduce peak demand by 18% by 2025, while the demand response savings policies would reduce conventionally generated electricity by an additional 11%, for a total reduction of 29%, the Washington-based advocacy organization said.

ACEEE researcher Max Neubauer said last session's energy bill (SB221, 127th General Assembly), which requires utilities reduce electricity consumption by at least 22% by 2025, positioned the state to be a national leader in energy efficiency.

Implementing several policy strategies will enable the state to reach the goal, the report said. Recommendations include:

- Expand the Electric Partnership Program and Home Weatherization Assistance Program, and provide incentives to improve efficiency for homes that are unable to participate in current programs.
- Create "manufacturing centers of excellence" by partnering with universities to overcome three key barriers: the need for assessments to identify energy efficiency opportunities, access to expertise, and expansion of trained workforce.
- Establish rural and agricultural initiatives, such as developing educational programs on energy efficiency, offering a rural audit program, and matching funds for USDA grants.
- Create an inter-agency stakeholder group to coordinate workforce development activities.
- Employ energy efficiency measures in state and local government facilities, which make up 31% of Ohio's commercial electricity consumption.
- Implement building energy codes that align with federal recommendations and help to build higher quality energy-efficient homes.

Implementing the policies could reduce Ohioans' electricity bill by a total of \$430 million in 2015 and \$3.3 billion by 2025, the report said.

THURSDAY, MARCH 26 2009

GOVERNOR 'VERY CONCERNED' OVER TRANSPORTATION BUDGET, CONFEREES SET WEEKEND MEETINGS; GOP QUESTIONS HOUSE VOTE

Gov. Ted Strickland said Thursday he was "very concerned" about the slow pace of a legislative conference committee reconciling differences over his proposed \$7.6 billion transportation budget, and several key issues in particular.

Negotiations over House and Senate versions of the measure (HB 2) continued behind the scenes as a March 31 target date for enactment approached. Four of the six conferees met briefly at 8:58 a.m. and promptly recessed pending the call of Chairman Peter Ujvagi (D-Toledo). He subsequently scheduled committee hearings on Saturday and Sunday.

Gov. Strickland met with reporters later to release a list of 149 projects the state will fund with its share of \$774 million in federal economic stimulus money earmarked for transportation. Appropriation authority necessary in order for the state to spend the cash is contained in the pending transportation budget.

"I am very concerned, very concerned. I've expressed the depth of my concern to some of my colleagues in the legislature," Gov. Strickland said when asked about the budget for the Department of Transportation and Department of Public Safety.

"But we are continuing to work - at least on our side in good faith - to try to come to a resolution of the serious remaining challenges that we face," the governor said.

"It would be my hope that I could get a bill in time to give it proper attention and perusal so that it can be signed by Tuesday night. But that will depend upon the willingness of all of those involved in these negotiations to work in good faith to try to resolve the difficult issues," he said.

At least three major areas of disagreement remain:

- A Senate decision to move the spending plan for public safety - and about \$150 million in vehicle-related fee increases - out of the transportation budget and into the main operating budget (HB 1) now pending in the House.
- Gov. Strickland's proposed elimination of a fuel evaporation tax credit for fuel dealers and retailers and use of the \$54 million in revenue to help fund \$200 million of infrastructure improvement projects.
- Legislative oversight of the governor's plan to operate railroad passenger trains on a line from Cleveland to Cincinnati through Columbus and Dayton.

Senate Republicans have consistently said they were unwilling to support two other executive proposals calling for stricter enforcement of the state's seat belt law and use of cameras to catch speeders in construction zones of interstate highways.

"Let me say that as governor I don't expect to get everything that I may have asked for ... there are areas that I will be willing to compromise on," Gov. Strickland said. "But I can tell you that there are some essentials in this bill," he said, including "an adequate funding mechanism" for the State Highway Patrol that is part of the public safety budget, and the evaporation tax credit.

ADMINISTRATION TO FUND 149 TRANSPORTATION PROJECTS WITH STIMULUS MONEY; LARGEST SHARES FOR CLEVELAND BRIDGE, NELSONVILLE BYPASS

The state will spend its \$774 million share of federal stimulus transportation funds on 149 priority projects that Gov. Ted Strickland identified on Thursday.

Reaching 87 of 88 counties, the projects are expected to create more than 21,000 jobs, with thousands more to follow.

Mr. Strickland said the money, combined with another \$2.1 billion in state-funded construction, gives Ohio a "unique" opportunity to build and adjust its transportation system for the future. Additionally, he said the projects will put many Ohioans to work quickly, helping to address the state's rising unemployment rates.

"We have identified projects that will put thousands of Ohioans to work quickly," the governor said. "But to make the best use of these resources, we must also leverage them to create tomorrow's opportunities."

The largest share of the federal funds, \$200 million, will go to support a \$400 million effort to build a new five-lane westbound bridge on Interstate 90 in Cleveland. Another significant share, \$150 million, will speed construction of the Nelsonville bypass on U.S. Route 33.

The list of funded projects was released at a Statehouse news conference where House Speaker Armond Budish (D-Beachwood) said the investments will help prepare the state for the future.

Speaker Budish said the spending would help the state address its "unprecedented" economic challenges, adding that the projects would give the economy a much-needed "shot in the arm."

The speaker noted that the House majority took steps to eliminate "bureaucratic roadblocks" that could delay the release of the funds and rejected attempts to establish "quotas" that would have forced money to be spent evenly across the state.

Mr. Strickland said the priority list focuses on "transformational" projects, many of which link different modes of transportation. Further, he said investments have been targeted to help develop unique regional economic development assets.

Mr. Strickland said the funded projects represent key initiatives that otherwise might never have been completed. As examples, he cited a Columbus road project near Nationwide Children's Hospital and a Toledo port renovation project.

The 149 projects were selected from more than 4,600 expressions of interest that were submitted through a state-run website, Ohio Department of Transportation Director Jolene Molitoris said. Of those 4,600 expressions, 3,257 funding applications were returned. Of that number, 2,222 met federal guidelines.

Mr. Strickland said Noble County is the only county not scheduled to receive federal funds because it didn't submit an eligible project. He said, however, that county will benefit from a \$9.7 million state-funded transportation project next year.

Ms. Molitoris noted that an additional \$161.5 has also been set aside for Ohio's major metropolitan planning organizations. The state will also receive \$29 million for rural and public transit capital projects.

SENATE MOVE TO REIMBURSE UTILITIES WITH FEDERAL STIMULUS FUNDS SPARKS OPPOSITION FROM CITIES

Municipalities and utilities were at odds Thursday over a Senate proposal that would require cities to spend millions in federal economic stimulus money to reimburse electric, gas and cable companies for costs of relocating lines.

Sen. Nina Turner (D-Cleveland) said city officials believe a one-paragraph amendment Republicans inserted in their version of the \$7.6 billion state transportation budget would have "a detrimental impact" on their use of the funds.

"It forces municipalities to pay utilities for relocating if federal stimulus dollars are utilized. And that is in direct contradiction to how local municipalities operate now. They allow the utilities to use the right of way ... at their expense," Sen. Turner said.

Mayor Frank Jackson of Cleveland said in a letter to Sen. Turner, the ranking minority member of the Senate Highways & Transportation Committee, that the proposal would require cities to incorporate the full cost of all utility relocations in their budgets for projects funded through the federal program.

"This will mean that cities will not be able to fund as many projects as initially planned and may not be able to fund some of these projects at all because of the increased costs resulting from utility relocations," Mr. Jackson said.

Sen. Turner said she would like to have the amendment removed or, at least, modified.

"It might be going against the spirit of what President Obama had in mind in the first place which is to get those dollars out into local areas, into our economy, so that we could put people back to work," she said in an interview.

"We need to consider what the local municipalities and townships are saying on this issue. And also the Ohio Municipal League has weighed in on this issue as well and they are vehemently against the Senate amendment," Sen. Turner said.

Separately, five utility organizations said in a letter to members of the transportation budget conference committee this week that the Senate amendment was both fair and necessary.

"The expenses incurred for these new projects will clearly fall outside of the utility companies' normal planning process of budgeting and allocation of resources and labor," the companies said.

"Without reimbursement of costs associated with relocation of facilities, inevitably, our shareholders, and/or customers will end up bearing additional, unplanned costs," the utilities said.

Signing the letter were officials of the Ohio Electric Utility Institute, Ohio Telecom Association, Ohio Gas Association, Ohio Cable Telecommunications Association, and Ohio Rural Electric Cooperatives, Inc.

The amendment provides that if state or local governments redirect the relocation of utility facilities as part of a construction project financed with federal stimulus funds they must reimburse the utility for the expense.

The same requirement would apply in the case of cable television companies, which would be defined as "utilities" for purposes of the provision.

Utilities contend that absent the amendment, their costs for the work would be incorporated into their rate base and their customers would pay the bill.

FRIDAY, MARCH 27 2009

LEGISLATURE MAY HAVE TO EXPAND UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION TO QUALIFY FOR FEDERAL STIMULUS FUNDS

The federal stimulus bill offers Ohio hundreds of millions of dollars for unemployment compensation, but the legislature might have to make some changes to eligibility and benefits to receive all of it, a state official said Friday.

And even if Ohio gets every cent of additional money, it will still probably have to borrow nearly \$2 billion from the federal government just to cover benefits this year.

Advocates for small businesses say the strings aren't worth the benefits and are urging Gov. Ted Strickland to follow the lead of several Republican governors and reject the money.

The federal economic stimulus package has funding to help states cope with rising unemployment costs for which Ohio already qualifies, according to the Ohio Department of Job & Family Services. Others provisions designed to encourage policy changes are currently under review to determine if legislation is necessary.

Although the state has had to borrow nearly \$577 million from the federal government since Ohio's Unemployment Compensation Trust Fund went broke late last year, the stimulus bill offers states a waiver on interest payments through 2010, Sara Hall Phillips, ODJFS labor policy analyst, said. That will save Ohio nearly \$174 million.

To qualify for an additional \$264.5 million under the Unemployment Insurance Modernization provision, Ohio might have to make some changes to state law, she said.

Ohio appears to already meet the requirement for an "alternate base period" enables unemployed individuals that don't meet the minimum weeks and wages requirement to be considered potentially eligible under a slightly different snapshot of time, she said.

While that qualifies Ohio for about \$88 million of the "UI modernization" funding, she said, the state must meet two out of four additional criteria to qualify for the remaining \$176.3 million:

- Expand eligibility for unemployment claimants who are seeking only part-time work.
- Expand eligibility for individuals who voluntarily quit their jobs for a "compelling family reason," such as the need to care for an ill family member, a spouse's job-related relocation or domestic violence.
- Stretch benefits beyond the regular time limit for individuals enrolled in certain job training programs.
- Provide at least \$15 per week in benefits for claimants' dependents.

"At this time, it is not entirely clear if legislation would be needed for Ohio to come into compliance with two out of four provisions. We are still exploring this, along with evaluating the costs of such changes," Ms. Phillips said in an email.

Although the funding would help Ohio manage rising unemployment insurance costs, recent projections from economic consultant Global Insight show the state will have to borrow \$1.94 billion to pay benefits in calendar year 2009, she said.

Strickland spokeswoman Amanda Wurst said the governor plans to make full use of the funding available in the federal economic stimulus package. He plans to work with the legislature on the next best steps in regards to the unemployment compensation benefits, she said.

"Ohioans are struggling and as the state unemployment rate increases as a result of the national recession, the governor does not want to leave any federal stimulus resources on the table, especially when additional federal benefits will help more Ohioans get back on their feet more quickly," Ms. Wurst said.

Meanwhile, the National Federation of Independent Business/Ohio recently sent a letter to Gov. Strickland saying limitations on the federal unemployment compensation assistance would increase costs to the already bankrupt system.

"NFIB members find the expansion of state unemployment programs extremely troubling. While the benefit expansions outlined are initially funded with one-time federal dollars, Ohio's job creators will be left holding the bag for years to come in the form of higher unemployment taxes," the letter says.

"To expand benefits of an already insolvent system at a time when unemployment levels have reached a 25-year high is a recipe for disaster," the group said.

Expressing similar concerns, Alaska Gov. Sarah Palin, Louisiana Gov. Bobby Jindal, South Carolina Gov. Mark Sanford and some other GOP governors have already announced they would reject federal stimulus funding that was tied to unemployment compensation.

Ohio Chamber of Commerce President and CEO Andy Doehrel, who co-chairs the Unemployment Compensation Advisory Council, took a more cautious approach.

"I understand their concerns, but it's a little early in the process. This isn't something we have to change tomorrow," he said, noting Ohio has a two-year window to accept the money.

"We need to take a closer look because the trust fund's borrowing money and if we can get some money from the feds that will save having increased costs to employers, we ought to be doing that. I'm sure NFIB would agree with that as well," he said.

Mr. Doehrel said members of the advisory committee are planning to schedule a meeting in the near future to discuss the issue. Legislative leaders recently appointed to the panel include: Rep. Kenny Yuko (D-Richmond Hts.); Rep. Eugene Miller (D-Cleveland); Rep. Bob Hackett (R-London); Sen. Steve Buehrer (R-Delta); Sen. Karen Gillmor (R-Tiffin); and Sen. Capri Cafaro (D-Hubbard).

TRANSPORTATION BUDGET CONFERENCE PUSHED BACK AGAIN TO MONDAY

The first major conference committee in 14 years to require truly bipartisan support will push the limits of a March 31 deadline, as plans were scrapped late Friday for two weekend hearings on the two-year transportation budget.

Chairman Rep. Peter Ujvagi's (D-Toledo) office announced late in the day that the meetings scheduled for Saturday and Sunday were canceled, and the next meeting set for 10 a.m. Monday in Statehouse Room 313, the large House Finance Room.

A few major sticking points including the funding of the State Highway Patrol have kept the Democratic House and Republican Senate from even initiating conference talks that were supposed to kick-start early this week. Both sides have accused the other of intransigence.

The legislature faces a Tuesday deadline to get the bill to Gov. Ted Strickland to keep capital funding schedules. The chambers plan floor votes on the conference report that day.

LEGISLATIVE INITIATIVES: HEARINGS SOUGHT ON JOB CREATION; WAR OF 1812 PANEL PROPOSED

Job Hearing Request: House Republicans this week asked for a special hearing on the subject of job creation before the Finance & Appropriations Committee.

The request from caucus leaders follows the release of unemployment data showing Ohio's rate for February had hit 9.4%, the highest in 25 years.

"As our state continues to face immense challenges caused by the global economic downturn, it is clear to us that the focus of all the efforts of the General Assembly should be on the singular goal of helping to put Ohioans back to work," the lawmakers said in a letter to Democratic leadership.

"Because we believe that [job creation] is the most critical issue facing the state, we are requesting a hearing of the full finance committee next week dedicated to asking the following question of the Administration: With Ohio receiving billions of dollars in federal stimulus money, are there funds and policies in place in the budget bill to ensure that every out of work Ohioan has access to the job training, retraining or further higher education they need to be re-employed?"

Republicans want to hear testimony from the Office of Budget and Management Director Pari Sabety and other cabinet officials.

Keary McCarthy, spokesman for Speaker Armond Budish (D-Beachwood), said he was not sure what the GOP was looking for since all of the officials mentioned have already appeared before the committee and budget subcommittees.

War Commission: Separately, Sen. Steve Buehrer (R-Delta) distributed a co-sponsor request this week in planning for the introduction of legislation to create the State of Ohio War of 1812 Bicentennial Commission.

"This commission will be used to enhance the public understanding of the significance of the War of 1812 as it relates to Ohio and the history of Canadian/U.S. relations," the lawmaker said in his bill sponsor request. "The War of 1812 touched many areas of the state and it is vital that we as Ohioans preserve our rich heritage." (Ohio War Fortifications)

Sen. Buehrer proposes an 18-member commission comprised of two legislators, seven citizens, including one from the Native American community, and representatives of state and local entities including Northwest State Community College.

HOUSING AGENCY TO ROLL OUT TAX CREDIT PROGRAM FOR FIRST-TIME HOMEBUYERS

The Ohio Housing Finance Agency on Monday will launch its new "Homebuyer Tax Credit Advantage Program," which will provide down payment and closing cost assistance to qualified homebuyers.

"Now is a great time for first-time homebuyers to enter the market and utilize many of the options offered by OHFA to help them become homeowners," OHFA Executive Director Doug Garver said in a news release.

"We are helping buyers take advantage of the new federal First-Time Homebuyer Tax Credit by offering what they need for down payment up front, making it easier for them to get their dream home."

Under the program, low- to moderate-income Ohioans may apply for loans for up to 3% of the home purchase price. Qualified first-time homebuyers may apply for the new federal tax credit of up to \$8,000.

The OHFA loans are for up to 15 years, allow purchasers to defer mortgage principal payments and carry a zero percent interest rate until July 1, 2010. More information is available on the agency's website.

COMMITTEE SCHEDULE FOR WEEK OF MARCH 30

SATURDAY, MARCH 28

Conference Committee on HB 2, (Chr. Ujvagi, 466-6017), Rm. 313, 10 a.m.

HB 2 TRANSPORTATION BUDGET (Ujvagi) To make appropriations for programs related to transportation and public safety for the biennium beginning July 1, 2009, and ending June 30, 2011, and to provide authorization and conditions for the operation of those programs.

SUNDAY, MARCH 29

Conference Committee on HB 2, (Chr. Ujvagi, 466-6017), Rm. 313, 1:30 p.m.

HB 2 TRANSPORTATION BUDGET (Ujvagi) To make appropriations for programs related to transportation and public safety for the biennium beginning July 1, 2009, and ending June 30, 2011, and to provide authorization and conditions for the operation of those programs.

TUESDAY, MARCH 31

Senate Insurance, Commerce & Labor, (Chr. Buehrer, 466-8150), South Hearing Rm., 4 p.m.

SB 34 GROUP HEALTH INSURANCE (Miller, D.) To require the Department of Administrative Services to create a health insurance program that allows municipal corporations, small employers, and nonprofit corporations or associations to purchase for their employees the same policies or contracts provided to state employees. (1st Hearing-Sponsor)

SB 66 VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS (Faber) To provide health insurance benefits to dependents of volunteer firefighters killed in the line of duty. (2nd Hearing-All testimony)

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 1

House Elections & Ethics, (Chr. Stewart, 466-1896), Rm. 122, 10 a.m.

HB 28 SHERIFF QUALIFICATIONS (Gerberry) To change the education and experience requirements necessary for eligibility to be a candidate for the office of sheriff. (1st Hearing-Sponsor)