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**Ohio Speech & Hearing Governmental Affairs Coalition  
Legislative Activities Report  
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The members 132<sup>nd</sup> Ohio General Assembly convened for the first time earlier this month as both chambers held their swearing in ceremonies. Republicans enter the 132<sup>nd</sup> General Assembly with historic majorities, having a 24-9 advantage in the Senate and a 66-33 edge in the House. The 132<sup>nd</sup> General Assembly also marks Governor Kasich's final legislative session as governor. Both of these scenarios will certainly make for an exciting two years!

The Senate officially elected Senator Larry Obhof as the new Senate President. President Obhof will be joined by Senator Bob Peterson who will serve as president pro tem., Senator Randy Gardner who was elected as majority floor leader, and Senator Gayle Manning as majority whip. Senate Democrats re-elected Senator Joe Schiavoni as minority leader. The rest of the Democratic leadership team includes Senator Charleta Tavares as assistant minority leader, Senator Edna Brown as minority whip, and Senator Cecil Thomas as assistant minority whip.

The House re-elected Speaker Cliff Rosenberger to lead the chamber. Speaker Rosenberger will be joined by Rep. Kirk Schuring as speaker pro tem., Rep. Dorothy Pelanda as majority floor leader, Rep. Sarah LaTourette as assistant majority floor leader, Rep. Tom Patton as majority whip and Rep. Rob McColley as assistant majority whip. House Democrats re-elected Rep. Fred Strahorn as minority leader. He will be joined by Assistant Minority Leader Nick Celebrezze, Minority Whip Nickie Antonio, and Assistant Minority Whip Emilia Sykes.

Senate Republicans recently announced its replacement for Senator Shannon Jones, who chose to leave the 7<sup>th</sup> Senate District to run for Warren County Commissioner. Her replacement, Steve Wilson, is a retired bank CEO from Lebanon. Mr. Wilson bested four other applicants including former Rep. Ron Maag for the recommendation, which must be voted on by the full Senate Republican Caucus.

Neither chamber has provided a complete list of committee assignments; however, the House has released a list of committee chairs. Of particular interest to OSHGAC, the House list of legislative panels includes a new Aging & Long-Term Care Committee, which will be chaired by Representative Steven Arndt (R-Port Clinton). Other key changes include panel consolidations, such as the Education & Career Readiness Committee and the Higher Education & Workforce Development Committee. Again of particular note to OSHGAC, the House Health Committee will be chaired by Representative Steve Huffman (R- Tipp City), the House Insurance Committee will be chaired by Representative Tom Brinkman (R- Mt. Lookout), the House Education Committee will be chaired by Representative Andrew Brenner (R- Powell).

Not surprisingly, Rep. Ryan Smith will serve as chairman of the House Finance Committee. Within the Finance Committee, the Health and Human Services Subcommittee will be chaired by Rep. Mark Romanchuk (R-Mansfield). Senate President Larry Obhof has also indicated that Senator Scott Oelslager will once again head the Senate Finance Committee. These positions will be key with the looming state budget, which is expected to be released by Governor Kasich by the end of the month. Governor Kasich has indicated that this will be an extremely “tight” budget as state revenues have been coming in under original projections.

The Kasich Administration might decide to use the budget as a vehicle to pass language that would consolidate several medical professional licensing boards. The proposal, which was introduced as stand-alone legislation (SB 366 and HB 617) last session, was drafted in response to antitrust concerns resulting from a ruling by the U.S. Supreme Court that found North Carolina’s Dental Board violated antitrust laws by having dentist, in effect regulate themselves by having members of the profession serve on the panel. The proposal would establish a third-party review process by the Department of Administrative Services (DAS), which would be triggered if a board action has the potential to violate state or federal antitrust laws. This review process, according to the Kasich Administration, is aimed squarely at shielding boards from potential legal action. In addition to the new level of DAS oversight, the proposal also included a controversial measure that would consolidate 16 licensing boards into eight. The proposal never gained traction during lame duck session; however, the need to address the antitrust concerns surrounding Ohio’s professional licensing boards along with a massive budget bill pending before lawmakers, provides an ideal situation for the Kasich Administration to push this policy proposal again in 2017.

No legislation has been introduced thus far in the 132<sup>nd</sup> General Assembly. We expect this to change once legislators return from their caucus retreats later this month.