Ohio Marine Trades Association
and Government Advantage Group

LEGISLATIVE REPORT

AUGUST 2023



Boating Featured at Ohio Chamber Policy Conference

Ohio Legislators and business leaders from across the state descended upon Sandusky, Ohio for the Ohio Chamber of Commerce's biennial policy conference. The Ohio Marine Trades Association (OMTA) was proud to sponsor the recreational boating activity on Thursday, August 10th. OMTA members generously donated their time, expertise, and most importantly BOATS to make the afternoon a success! Special thanks to: Catawba Moorings, Clemons Boats, Pier 53, South Shore Marine, Skipper Buds and True North Yacht Sales for volunteering their resources.

We were able to host roughly 20 lawmakers, including key members of House and Senate Leadership, and their spouses. We also had former Lt. Governor Mary Taylor on board! We had area leaders from Shores and Island, along with CedarFair in attendance as well. Plus, we had a professional videographer aboard to film content for future marketing opportunities. Michelle Burke thought of EVERYTHING to maximize the exposure for OMTA from the event.

All boaters received a branded bag from OMTA that included a hat (that came in handy for many of the boaters), sunscreen and a publication highlighting the recently released Boating Economic Impact Study. We spent the afternoon on the water making our way to Put-in-Bay. We spent a couple of hours on the island visiting local businesses and checking out some special exhibits on the island as part of Lake Erie Awareness Day that happened to be held the same day we were there. Then we reboarded the boats to head back to the docks in Sandusky.

The feedback was overwhelming! The Ohio Marine Trades Association is also going to explore hosting a boating focused event in the years the Chamber does not host their conference. In addition to the exposure to the boating industry for the legislators on the boats, OMTA was also recognized in the program that all attendees received.

Ohio State Fair 2023

The Ohio State Fair was held July 26 – August 6th. The ODNR was present at their flagship National Resources Park on the grounds. This Park represent all of the outdoor recreation Ohio has to offer. This includes an actual kayak pond! Legislators and other state officials were at the fair throughout the event. ODNR hosted the annual Cardinal games that have legislators and cabinet members competing in skill events. Several ODNR leaders were in attendance: Director Mertz, Mindy Bankey, Glen Cobb, Steve Harvey, Katie Hegarty and many more. It was a good time and a great way to highlight Ohio's outdoor recreation abundance.

According to the Ohio State Fair's post fair release: In 2023, Fair attendance increased by 16.7% with approximately 1,006,228 fairgoers. The Fair also broke a single-day attendance record, with 119,660 visitors on Saturday, Aug. 5. Next year, the Ohio State Fair will run July 24 through Aug. 4, 2024.

The Heart of it All Returns

Ohio has announced the return of "The Heart of it All" as the tourism slogan. This replaces the previous brand "Find it Here". If your business uses the tourism logo on any of your publications, please consider updating it to the new branding logo.

Election Update

On August 8, 2023, Ohio held a special election to vote on one initiative. Issue 1 would have increased the threshold to amend Ohio's constitution from 50% plus 1 vote, to 60%. It would have also increased the requirements to qualify for a statewide constitutional ballot initiative. Turnout was higher than expected for an August election and unofficial election result had the initiative failing to pass by a roughly 57% to 43% margin. This means the process to amend Ohio's constitution will not change.

On November 7, 2023, Ohioans will be back at the polls. At least 2 statewide initiatives will be before the electorate.

- A Constitutional amendment regarding reproductive rights; and
- An initiated statute to legalize recreational marijuana.

Expect to hear much about both of these issues as the election nears.

Council of State Governments Opportunity

Senator Bill Reineke is charged with assisting on planning a 2024 conference in Ohio for the Council of State Governments' Midwest region. Senator Reineke had attended the CIC Legislative Brunch hosted by OMTA and was impressed by the presentations done regarding boating, Lake Erie and it's economic impact. He is planning to recreate the program for the conference. OMTA looks forward to providing any assistance with this endeavor.

Fish Ohio Day

OMTA was represented at the Governor's Fish Ohio Day on July 20, 2023. During official remarks, ODNR Director Mary Mertz focused on boating and highlighted the recent economic impact study. OMTA was pleased with this focus, and it was another great event and opportunity to put the spotlight on Lake Erie.

State Budget Finalized

The Ohio legislature and Governor have finalized the biennial State operating budget. This expansive bill includes tax policy changes and the funding levels for all state agencies for the next years. Below are provisions of interest to OMTA.

- Tourism Ohio will remain named as such, but the mission will be promoting not just tourism, but also "living, learning, and working" in Ohio. Since the budget was finalized Matt McClaren, the TourismOhio Director, has resigned to take a position at the Ohio Chamber of Commerce.
- Makes changes to the commercial activities tax (phasing in over 2 years a $6million exemption to the CAT). Excludes, for tax periods beginning in 2024, businesses with taxable gross receipts of $3 million or less and, for tax periods beginning in 2025 and thereafter, businesses with taxable gross receipts of $6 million or less from the CAT. Designates the $3 million and $6 million thresholds, respectively, as "exclusion amounts," and excludes the exclusion amount from gross receipts subject to the 0.26% tax rate for taxpayers that remain subject to the tax.
- Makes reductions in the State income tax. The income tax brackets will be reduced from three down to two. Ohioans earning less than $26,050 annually pay no state income taxes. Those earning up to $100,000 will now pay 2.75%, and everyone above that salary will pay 3.5%.

- Expands and extends the sales tax holiday and general provides that items under $500 are included (with some exceptions)
- Prohibits knowingly providing false statements or engaging in any fraudulent act related to a commercial driver's license (CDL) test.
- Provides $1 million for security enhancements and reimbursements for next April's total solar eclipse. Ohio is directly in the viewing path of the eclipse, and it is expected to draw significant visitors to the state.
- Removes floatation device designation list from 1547.25
- Amends requirements for powercraft to carry fire extinguishers (1547.27)
- Allows 60 days to transfer title, as opposed to 30 days (1548.03)
- Changes what a registrar issues a watercraft trailer from a "placard" to a "license plate" (4503.311)
- Transfers from the Treasurer of State to the Registrar of Motor Vehicles the responsibility to receive sales and use taxes from the sale of motor vehicles, off-highway motorcycles, and all-purpose vehicles that are collected by each clerk of courts.
- Provides $875,000 per fiscal year for weed reduction for Indian Lake, plus $125,000 per year for other expense of the Indian Lake Watershed Project.
- Provides robust funding for H2Ohio.
- Generally, protects funding priorities for ODNR. The House had made significant cuts. Michelle Burke testified in the Senate for those to be restored. You can read Ms. Burke's testimony here.

Sales Tax Receipts

The Ohio Department of Taxation has posted sale tax receipts for motor vehicle and watercraft sales and use taxes for the second half of 2022. These numbers for watercraft represent a roughly $500,000 decrease on collections over the same time period of 2021. And roughly $2million less than was collect the in the first half of 2022.

Second half of 2022 (July 2022 – December 2022)

	State Collections	Permissive Collections	Total Collections
Collections from sales of motor vehicles	$1,008,424,615	$ 249,583,388	$1,258,008,004
Collections from the sales of watercraft	$ 12,587,596	$ 2,925,845	$ 15,513,441
Totals	$1,021,012,212	$ 252,509,233	$1,273,521,445

Legislature's Schedule

The Ohio legislature has been on recess since completing the budget at the end of June 2023. They do plan to return to the Statehouse for limited activity in September and will be more active starting in October. On the horizon is another round of meetings of the Ohio Redistricting Commission. This body is responsible drawing the lines for Congressional and legislative districts. The previous process was marred by controversy

and cases before the Supreme Court. With Republican members of the Commission possibly viewing the court as more favorable this time, it remains to be seen how the process will play out.
The current General Assembly runs until the end of 2024, so we don't expect a bevy of activity before the end of this year. That is typically saved for lame duck sessions. However, the legislature could consider a capital budget bill before the holiday recess of 2023.