Ohio Marine Trades Association
and Government Advantage Group

LEGISLATIVE REPORT

MARCH 2025



State Budget – House Version Released

The House released their version of House Bill 96, the biennial budget bill, on April 1, 2025. OMTA was pleased to see several of the changes made.

Our organization formally opposed a change proposed to what tax is collected for watercraft purchases that will be taken out of state (ORC 5739.027). Currently purchasers pay lesser of the rate in the jurisdiction where they are purchasing and what they would pay in the jurisdiction where the boat will be registered. Under the as introduced version of HB 96, they would have been assessed: the amount of tax that would be due under this chapter and Chapter 5741. of the Revised Code if the total combined rate was six per cent. We requested an amendment be submitted for consideration to remove this change from HB 96 and that was incorporated.

OMTA also had some questions regarding a proposal to increase boat registration fees regularly by inflation. The OMTA Board voted to oppose the proposal until we received additional detail on how the increase will be used to benefit boating, by way of ramps, dock upgrades and washing stations. The proposal was removed from the House version of the budget.

The House will go through one more round of possible amendments. They plan to vote the bill out and send to the Senate for consideration on April 9th.

Transportation Budget- Signed

On March 19th the House and Senate concurred on House Bill 54, the state's transportation budget and on April 1st Governor DeWine signed the HB 54 into law.

OMTA was advocating for an amendment to change Ohio law, that would exempt watercraft dealers from having a notary on staff to sign the title document. This exemption has been in place for auto dealers and the OMTA believed the same should be in place for the watercraft dealers. We proposed this amendment be incorporated into HB 54, and it was included in the final version of the bill.

"Spotter" Bill Introduced

Representative Levi Dean has introduced House Bill 183 to remove the requirement that boats have a "spotter" when participating in towing water sports. Under the bill, a boat with a rearview mirror would be an acceptable alternative to a person serving as the spotter. The Ohio Marine Trades Association has long been opposed to this proposal for safety reasons. The bill also doesn't take into account risk levels on different bodies of water and at different times of the season, nor skill level of the person being towed.

Senate Passes Marijuana Law Changes

The Ohio Senate has passed Senate Bill 56 that makes changes to the recreational marijuana law passed by voters in 2023. The bill does things such as modifying THC limits and the number of plants that can be "home grown". The bill also tightens provisions regarding public use. While the citizen initiative statute stated that public places were not required to allow use, and could prohibit it, the changes passed as part of SB 56 would specify that: the smoking, combustion, and vaporization of adult-use and homegrown marijuana, and vaporization of medical marijuana, is permitted only in a private residence that is not a childcare home or a

residential premises occupied pursuant to a rental agreement that prohibits such activities.

SB 56 passed the Ohio Senate on a party line vote and will now be considered by the Ohio House. A House member, Representative Brian Stewart, introduced House Bill 160. His proposal includes changes to the marijuana laws, as well as a proposal to put all hemp sales into marijuana dispensaries. The House Bill also proposes changes to public use of marijuana, though they aren't as restrictive as the Senate plan.