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OHIO REPORT

SPECIAL REPORT

125th General Assembly

Tuesday, April 8, 2003

A GONGWER NEWS SERVICE SPECIAL REPORT: BUDGET BILL (HB 95) OMNIBUS BUDGET AMENDMENT

The following provides a brief description of items included in the omnibus budget amendment offered Tuesday, April 8 in the House Finance & Appropriations Committee:

- generally prohibits government agencies from providing duplicative or competing electronic commerce services with the private sector other than specified cable services, but establishes procedures under which government agencies may provide those services under certain circumstances (see House Bill 145, 125th General Assembly);
- provides for uniform municipal income tax collection;
- provides pay raises for certain township clerks based on a township's budget;
- changes the formula for distribution of special education funding;
- increases line item set-aside funding for specified primary & secondary education programs (school nutrition, disadvantaged pupil aid, etc.)
- special state subsidy for community schools with certain student populations;
- creates a "still birth" certificate;
- reinstates the Ohio SchoolNet Commission;
- limits payments to community schools;
- establishes a grievance procedure to hear complaints regarding services provided by the Legal Rights Service Commission;
- removes authority of the Department of Job and Family Services to seek a Medicaid waiver to provide personal care services to qualified individuals in residential care facilities;
- requires the Board of Regents to study possible mergers of co-located institutions of higher education and requires study of converting to either a quarter-hour or semester-hour system;
- restores the Ohio Rail Development Commission;
- requires Medicaid program to continue to cover podiatric, dental and vision care services;
- removes provisions that would have permitted the state long-term care ombudsperson to investigate certain community-based long-term care providers;
- reinstates the Office of Criminal Justice Services;
- increases to seven the membership of the Ohio Civil Rights Commission;
- increases to seven the membership on the State Racing Commission;
- increases to seven the number of members the governor appoints to the Workers' Compensation Oversight Commission;
- increases to six the membership of the State Personnel Board of Review;
- increases to ten the membership of the Ohio Elections Commission;
- increases to seven the membership of the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio;
- adds two members to the Ohio Board of Tax Appeals;
- allows marriage and family therapists to diagnose and treat and manage mental disorders;
- increases to \$25,000 the threshold above which county contracts must be awarded by competitive bidding;
- freezes the local government funds with the effect of reducing payments by \$53.6 million over the biennium;
- changes minimum school year from total days to total classroom hours and eliminates excused calamity days;
- increases the state sales tax from 5% to 6% between July 1, 2003 and June 30, 2005, applies the tax to certain services and eliminates some current exemptions;

- creates the Legislative Budget Audit Commission to examine state agency operations and recommend efficiencies to the General Assembly;
- moves the State Fire Marshal from the Department of Commerce to the Department of Public Safety;
- removes telephone companies from the public utility gross receipts tax and requires them to pay the corporate franchise tax.

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