



Governor DeWine delivers his first State of the State address

March 6, 2019

On March 5, 2019, Governor Mike DeWine (R) delivered his first State of the State address during a joint House and Senate session. Governor DeWine returned to past tradition and spoke from the Ohio House chamber in the Statehouse.

In interviews earlier this week, the governor promised the speech would contain no surprises. However, the State of the State address did provide more details on his upcoming budget proposal and certain policy priorities that were previously unknown. In a speech that lasted about 45 minutes in length, the governor restated his administration's top priorities, previewed the introduction of the state's general operating budget, which is scheduled to be formally introduced by March 15, and called for Ohioans to work together to move the state forward.

The governor repeatedly said that now is the time to invest in Ohio's future and implored republicans and democrats to govern together so the state can move forward.

Transportation Budget

The governor opened the policy portion of his remarks by calling for investment in Ohio's roads and bridges. With debate over the \$7.4 billion transportation budget (H.B. 62) in full swing in the Ohio House, Governor DeWine reiterated his call for an 18-cent increase to the motor fuel user fee. The governor cited the hundreds of thousands of miles of roadways and bridges that need attention. Earlier this year, the Ohio Department of Transportation reported to the General Assembly that the state faces a funding shortfall that imperils routine maintenance as well as needed expansion of Ohio's roadways and bridges to continue economic development and growth. The governor detailed the full extent of the shortfall—at least \$1.2 billion per year. He

described the proposed \$0.18 increase to the motor fuel user fee as a “minimalist” approach that will raise only the “bare minimum” of what is needed.

The House plans to make its amendments and vote on the transportation budget this week and send the legislation to the Senate. The entire transportation budget must be adopted by March 31.

FY2020-2021 State Budget

The governor previewed his budget proposal, which must be introduced by March 15, stating that his proposal will plant the seeds for future opportunity. Utilizing the speech’s theme of investing in Ohio’s future, Governor DeWine proposed new programs and initiatives to enhance workforce development, education at all levels, economic development and public health.

State law requires that the two-year operating budget be passed and signed by June 30. While the governor’s speech was light on details, he did highlight the broad subject areas that defined his campaign and those that are expected as the centerpieces of his administration.

Children’s Initiatives

Governor DeWine has made children a focus of his administration, starting with some of his very first acts as governor. Not surprisingly, large portions of the address centered on his administration’s plans to address public health issues facing children and early childhood education. At one point, he remarked that education is the key to opportunity and equality and, later, pledged to increase investment in quality, early childhood education.

The governor did not shy away from Ohio’s high infant mortality rate, saying, “this must stop. We must work together to do it.” Governor DeWine stated that he challenged his team to work across agencies to save lives and focus on the public health challenges of children, early childhood deaths and opioid abuse.

The governor also pledged support for at-risk mothers by tripling in-home visits from evidenced-based home-visiting programs. He also detailed increased support for caregivers and the challenges working families face in childcare and wellbeing.

Opiate/Heroin Addiction Prevention & Treatment

As expected, large portions of the speech detailed the governor’s plans to tackle addiction.

Governor DeWine already appointed an advisory council that includes former Governor Ted Strickland and retired Ohio Supreme Court Justice Evelyn Lundberg Stratton. The panel’s written recommendations on subjects such as parity, stigma and education, workforce development, prevention, treatment and recovery, and system linkage are due this week.

The governor called for expanding the state’s treatment capacity for mental health and addiction, especially as it relates to children, including consistently educating children in grades K-12 on the dangers of drugs, alcohol and drug abuse. He also said that the administration will infuse resources directly into communities to address the war on opioids and invest in specialty dockets in Ohio’s courts to direct offenders to treatment instead of jails. Finally, Governor DeWine proposed a new public health fund that will promote innovative public-private partnerships to increase public health awareness and strategies.

Lake Erie

Citing recent algal blooms that caused massive disruptions to Toledo’s water systems, the governor outlined his plans to address the problem and preserve Lake Erie as an economic driver and tourist attraction. Governor DeWine called for fully funding previously passed initiatives designed to address the algal bloom and said that his budget proposal will contain a new fund, called the H2Ohio Fund.

Economic Development and Workforce Development

In a nod to Lt. Governor Jon Husted, Governor DeWine described his administration’s plans for economic development and highlighted the work of Innovate Ohio. Remarks included utilizing opportunity zones for targeted economic development and

increased workforce development through increased offerings at Ohio's community colleges and an effort to create at least 10,000 industry certificates.

Energy

The governor reiterated his calls for an "all-of-the-above" energy strategy that utilizes clean energy to power Ohio's homes and businesses. The legislature is expected to again grapple with several complex energy issues, including electricity generation and fuel sources, advanced and renewable energy and the Ohio Renewable Portfolio Standards, and property line set-backs for wind energy projects.

Conclusion

Bricker's Government Relations team continues to monitor reactions to Governor DeWine's speech for insights on how the General Assembly may amend the governor's initial budget proposal. With a shorter timeline than in recent years, this year's legislative budget process is condensed and will likely be fast-paced. As details emerge on the governor's plans over the next biennium, we will update our [website](#) and [budget resource page](#).

Authors



Matthew R. Koppitch

Senior Associate

Columbus

614.227.8824

mkoppitch@bricker.com



Gregory J. Lestini

Partner

Columbus

614.227.4893

glestini@bricker.com



Christopher N. Slagle

Partner & Government Relations Chair

Columbus

614.227.8826

cslagle@bricker.com



Brock A. Miskimen

Of Counsel

Columbus

614.227.2340

bmiskimen@bricker.com