

OACAA Briefing

The latest news from OACAA and Ohio's CAAs



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Legislative Update: Lame-duck session

After months of campaigning for the November 4th election, the Ohio General Assembly returned to action earlier this month for what is turning out to be a very active “lame-duck” session. Why the urgency to pass legislation? Because any bill that is not passed by the end of December must be reintroduced during the next legislative session and begin the committee process all over again. Among a number of other issues, there has been considerable debate on legislation dealing with municipal tax reform, speed cameras, death penalty drugs, redistricting, concealed carry weapons, education, pay raises and telecommunications.

Earlier this month the House added language to HB 490, in regards to the telecommunications issue. The addition would eliminate a long-standing requirement for telephone companies to offer basic local service when the Federal Communications Commission approves regulations to shift the industry from wire lines to Internet protocol technology. When there was talk that Governor Kasich might veto the bill because of this provision, the House added language that would give the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio (PUCO) more authority over the process. A fail-safe mechanism would allow the PUCO to order companies to provide telephone service to certain customers for a year. However, these changes haven't seemed to alter Governor Kasich's position on this issue and the threat of a veto to HB 490 is still a very real possibility. OACAA opposes this language as well because it could leave rural and elderly Ohioans without reliable and affordable telephone service. We have communicated this position with the legislature and have asked our agencies to contact their state legislators to express their opposition as well.

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