

Government Relations Practice Group Year in Review

In 2025, as we do every year, we will continue advocating for our clients on legislative and policy matters of public concern. We will proactively inform our clients about significant political and policy developments, nurture their relationships with key stakeholders, and continue to serve as their advocate and resource on all government-related matters.



News/Recognitions

Introduction and Passage of Ohio House Bill 531 – Braden’s Law

We are proud to announce the passage of House Bill 531, also known as *Braden’s Law*, after serving as the primary lobbyists advancing the legislation through the firm’s pro bono program. The bill, which classifies sextortion as a felony in Ohio, was introduced on May 15, 2024, and signed into law by Governor Mike DeWine on January 8, 2025. It passed both chambers of the legislature with unanimous bipartisan support during the year-end lame-duck session.

The Benesch team was led by Rachel Winder, with support from Holly Gross.

Rob Zimmerman Selected as Co-Chair of Moritz College of Law National Council



Rob Zimmerman, a 1991 graduate of The Ohio State University Moritz College of Law, has been selected to serve as Co-Chair of the law school’s National Council. A longtime member of the National Council, Rob began his term as Co-Chair last fall.

In this role, he collaborates with the Dean, other leadership, and the law school’s advancement team to further the mission of the Moritz College of Law. His responsibilities include advocating for the school, supporting students, assisting with graduate placement, promoting diversity and inclusion, and strengthening connections within the legal community.

Rachel Winder Receives 2025 Legislative Champion Award from Ohio Auctioneers Association



We are proud to announce that Rachel Winder, Government Relations Manager, has been awarded the 2025 Ohio Auctioneers Association Legislative Champion Award, presented by Governor Mike DeWine in January.

This honor recognizes her exceptional advocacy before the 135th Ohio General Assembly, where she successfully helped defeat multiple attempts to weaken the regulatory framework governing auctioneers. Her dedication has been instrumental in preserving the integrity and credibility of the profession after previously working to reduce regulatory burdens during the last General Assembly.

Government Relations Group Recognized by *U.S. News & World Report* “Best Law Firms”



The Government Relations group has achieved a Metropolitan Tier 1 ranking for Government Relations in Cleveland, OH, in the 2025 edition of *Best Lawyers*® “Best Law Firms.” This recognition is based on a rigorous evaluation process,

including client and professional references, peer reviews by leading attorneys, interviews with industry experts, and a comprehensive assessment of firm data submitted as part of the formal research process.

2024 Matter Highlights

- Successfully defeated a last-minute lame-duck amendment aimed at eliminating minimum continuing education requirements for a client.
- Successfully passed an amendment on behalf of a not-for-profit client to align the state to federal law by eliminating a prohibition on compensation from certain private businesses, paving the way for a grant award of \$750,000.
- Exempted a client's operations from new regulatory oversight of the Ohio Attorney General.
- Secured a gubernatorial veto that resulted in saving a not-for-profit organization from forced dissolution and asset diversion to an overzealous grantee organization.
- Secured \$1 million in Ohio one-time strategic community investment funds for a client's development project.
- Successfully negotiated the elimination of statutory regulatory restrictions impacting a client.
- Achieved 12 amendments to administrative rules for opioid treatment programs to facilitate reducing the regulatory burden and save the company significant staffing costs.
- Advocated for passage of regulatory reforms on behalf of medical and adult-use marijuana clients, including reduced operator licensing fees, lower patient costs, and streamlined processes for the launch of adult-use sales in Ohio.
- Represented and advised a sports gaming supplier in an informal investigation by the Ohio Casino Control Commission, which paved the way for smooth sale of the business to an industry-leading public company.
- Led a comprehensive five-year rule review process for a public agency, including proposing amendments to modernize and enhance the administrative code.
- Advocated successfully to uphold high-quality real estate education standards by ensuring national credentialing and oversight of state regulatory boards.
- Secured official recognition of Computer Science Education Week through a proclamation by Governor DeWine.
- Prevented the passage of Ohio legislation that would have conflicted with the federal Mammography Quality Standards Act.
- Preserved and enhanced the market position and corporate structure of an Ohio transportation equipment company through strategic and successful legislative advocacy efforts.
- In role as Vice Chair of the Ohio State Bar Association Nonprofit Corporation Subcommittee, helped to draft and provided public testimony and agency implementation of legislation to update Ohio's nonprofit corporation statute and the Ohio Department of Tax clearance process.
- Helped to save a \$1 million grant through effective negotiation with a federal agency.
- As special counsel hired by the Cuyahoga County Prosecutor, successfully defended a Cuyahoga County Common Pleas Court Judge in disqualification proceedings filed by a convicted double murderer in the Ohio Supreme Court. The Supreme Court dismissed the proceedings, and the judge remains on the case.
- Drafted legislation for an Ohio municipality to revise the compensation structure for the mayor, city council, and department directors.
- Represented multiple clients in zoning and land use matters in Ohio and around the country.
- Advised and raised funds for multiple successful candidates for legislative and judicial office.



2024 Speaking Engagements

Cheryl Burchard

Speaking Engagement | March 22, 2024

[Celebrate Women Conference](#)

Holly Gross

Speaking Engagement | February 07, 2024

[Sports Gaming in Ohio](#)

Speaking Engagement | September 12, 2024

[Legislative Update for the Metals Industry](#)

Rachel Winder

Speaking Engagement | January 11, 2024

[Ohio Auctioneers Association, Legislative and Political Update](#)

Speaking Engagement | March 5, 2024

[Women In Business 2024 Ohio Chamber of Commerce](#)

Robert Zimmerman

Speaking Engagement | March 15, 2024

[Understanding Highway Rights of Way](#)

Speaking Engagement | October 23, 2024

[Vote 2024: Election Law and Integrity in Ohio](#)

Speaking Engagement | October 2, 2024

[Ohio State Bar Association for Legal Professionals | OSBA](#)

Speaking Engagement | October 19, 2024

[Ohio Radiological Society Fall Meeting](#)

Speaking Engagement | November 23, 2024

[Civic Leaders of America](#)

Speaking Engagement | October 24, 2024

[Critical States, Critical Votes: The 2024 U.S. Election Landscape](#)

Speaking Engagement | November 07, 2024

[Public Records and Legal Ethics](#)



2024 Publications

The members of Benesch's Government Relations Practice Group study and evaluate proposed or existing legislation to determine possible effects upon our clients and regularly publish client bulletins on the most pressing issues.

Client Bulletins | January 09, 2024

[What to Expect in 2024 at the Ohio Statehouse](#)

Client Bulletins | June 03, 2024

[Ohio Legislators Introduce Braden's Law to Criminalize Sextortion](#)

Client Bulletins | November 26, 2024

[Ohio General Assembly Tackles Lame Duck Session and Selects New Leaders for the Next](#)



Appointments and Civic Affiliations

In addition to their law practices, the members of the Government Relations Practice Group serve in government-appointed positions and on the boards of many civic organizations.

Cheryl Burchard

- OWC Founding Associate Director
- Member, Ohio Lobbying Association
- Governor's Appointment, Nominating Council Member, Public Utilities Commission of Ohio (PUCO)

N. Victor Goodman

- Former Member, The State of Ohio Board of Pharmacy
- Served two terms as Trustee of the Ohio University

Holly F. Gross

- Trustee, PAST Foundation
- Vice-Chair, Ohio State Bar Association Nonprofit Corporation Subcommittee (of the Corporation Law Committee)
- Member, Ohio Lobbying Association
- Ohio Rising Star 2025
- Member, Ohio Chamber Economic Development Committee

Juan Morado Jr.

- Board Director and Vice-President, La Casa Norte
- Board Director, Metropolitan Pier and Exposition Authority
- Board of Directors and Past President, Hispanic Lawyers Association of Illinois (HLAI)
- Board Director, HLAI Charities
- Board Member, National Kidney Foundation of Illinois
- Board Member, We CAN Achieve Foundation
- Advisory Board Member, Teatro Vista
- Chair, Emeritus of Latino Leadership Council
- Member, Hispanic National Bar Association (HNBA)

- Member, Chicago Bar Association
- Member, Illinois Association of Health Law Attorneys
- Member, Illinois Supreme Court Rules Committee
- Member, American Health Law Attorney Association
- Member, Benesch Hiring Committee, Chicago Office
- Past Board Director, Public Interest Law Initiative

Martha J. Sweterlitsch

- Columbus Bar Association, Admissions Committee
- Elder Law Specialty Board, Ohio State Bar Association
- Member, Downtown Consulting Board, Central Ohio YMCA
- Trustee Emeritus, Ohio United Way
- Former Chair, Ohio Association of Nonprofit Organizations
- Past Commodore, Hoover Sailing Club
- Westerville Education Foundation Board of Directors

Rachel Winder

- Founding Executive Director, the Ohio Women's Coalition
- Governor's Appointment to the Select Committee on Telecom
- Member, Ohio Chamber of Commerce Board and Tax and Public Policy Committees
- Member, Columbus Chamber of Commerce – Government Affairs Steering Committee
- Member, Ohio Lobbying Association – Nominating and Membership Committees
- Member, EBW 2020

Robert A. Zimmerman

- Executive Committee Member, Lifetime Member, Eighth District Judicial Conference
- Leadership Cleveland Class of 2023
- Co-Chair of National Council, The Ohio State University Moritz College of Law
- Secretary and Board Member of Friendship Circle (special needs children service organization)
- Charter Class Member, Cleveland Bridge Builders
- Member, City Club of Cleveland
- Member, Shaker Heights City Council, 2006-2021
- Former Member, Ohio Democratic Party Executive Committee
- Member, Cuyahoga County Democratic Party Central and Executive Committees
- Director of Finance, Cuyahoga County Democratic Party
- Delegate to 2000 Democratic National Convention on behalf of Vice President Al Gore
- Past Board Member of Jewish Federation of Cleveland, Anti-Defamation League (Civil Rights Committee Chair), American Jewish Committee, Cleveland Jewish News, and Menorah Park Center for Senior Living
- Member, Ohio State Bar Association
- Member, Cleveland Metropolitan Bar Association
- Ohio Super Lawyer 2025



Benesch's Government Relations Practice Group

We navigate state and local government to get results for our clients. With over 100 years of experience among our attorneys and lobbyists, we have the knowledge, insight, and relationships to get the job done.

- We advocate for you before the Ohio General Assembly, Governor, executive branch departments, and other state officials to initiate and pass laws important to your business or organization.
- We monitor and analyze proposed bills and amendments and assess how the potential law could impact you. We then work to help support, oppose, or make the changes that matter to you.
- We work closely with state agencies as they develop rules and regulations that could impact your business or organization. We examine proposed changes so you know about and can influence those regulations before any potential negative impact to your operations. Our clients have won multimillion-dollar government contracts with our help.
- We have negotiated and secured funding and incentives for client priorities through state grants and through operating and capital budget bills.
- We help our clients develop grassroots and grasstops campaigns to institute change on the state and local level.
- We regularly appear before local city councils and other bodies on land use and zoning issues and other matters of local concern.



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