



WEEKLY LEGISLATIVE REPORT

January 22, 2010

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Please route to all interested parties in your township.

MAJORITY LEADER BISHOP OUTLINES GOVERNMENT REFORMS

On Tuesday, Senate Majority Leader Mike Bishop (R-Rochester) outlined several proposals for saving \$2.24 - \$2.6 billion in what he called the "Year of the Reform," referring to 2010. Included among the recommendations is the Senate Republican's version of health care reform for all Michigan public service employees, which would require public employees to pay 15 percent to 20 percent of their health care premiums. In addition, the reform plan calls for an expedited process for police and fire contract negotiations under PA 312 as well as changes in the Urban Cooperation Act and Intergovernmental Transfer of Functions Act to specify that local governments would not be required to pay employees the highest wages and benefits previously paid to any employees or their pre-existing bargaining units. The reform plan also calls for a constitutional amendment to reduce the compensation of all public servants by 5 percent for the next three years. Additional proposed reforms would impact school districts, Medicaid and the department structure of state government. The majority leader also announced the formation of the new Senate Reforms and Restructuring Committee, which will be chaired by Sen. Bishop, to begin considering the proposed reforms.

HOUSE COMMITTEE CONSIDERS PERMANENT ABSENTEE VOTER LIST LEGISLATION

The House Ethics and Elections Committee considered a bill to require that a permanent absentee voter (AV) list be maintained by clerks. The original version of HB 5456, introduced by Rep. Fred Miller (D-Clinton Chtr. Twp.), would require county, city, township and village clerks to establish the permanent lists and to add qualified electors who request to be included on the list in person, or by telephone, fax or mail. MTA testified in support of the legislation if changes are included to allow clerks to purge the list of those who fail to vote AV after four years, thereby reducing the costs of mailing AV ballot applications to those not voting by AV ballot; to eliminate the inclusion of county clerks in the process; and to grandfather in existing lists that have been maintained by local clerks. Others testified along similar lines and committee Chairwoman Rep. Kathy Angerer (D-Dundee Twp.) decided to hold the vote until next week to allow more time for changes to be made to the bill.

NEW ACT ALLOWS MORE FARMERS TO DEFER PROPERTY TAXES

Gov. Granholm recently signed into law legislation to amend the General Property Tax Act to require deferment of summer property taxes for agricultural property owned by a limited liability company (LLC). While LLCs provide farmers with liability protection, LLCs were not previously eligible for property tax deferment. Under PA 189 of 2009, introduced by Rep. Dudley Spade (D-Franklin Twp.), individual members of the LLC must still meet the income qualifications under the act.

SECOND ROUND OF BROADBAND GRANTS ANNOUNCED; SEMINARS PLANNED

The second round of broadband grants and loans under the American Recovery & Reinvestment Act has been announced to expand broadband access and adoption. Applications will be accepted from Feb. 16 through March 15 under two federal programs. Details for the funding can be found at www.michigantownships.org/grantdonate.asp. In addition, MTA is co-sponsoring day-long seminars to help communities be positioned to apply for the federal funding and to be prepared for the 2010 Census counts. Seminars are taking place Feb. 8 in Marquette, Feb. 9 at Houghton Lake, Feb. 16 in Lansing, Feb. 17 in Saginaw, and Feb. 22 in Detroit. Cost of the seminar is \$15. More facts and registration details can be found at <http://broadband.mel.org>.

NO LEGISLATIVE REPORT NEXT WEEK DUE TO MTA EDUCATIONAL CONFERENCE

MTA staff will be participating in the 2010 MTA Educational Conference and Expo in Grand Rapids all of next week, which includes the MTA Annual Meeting taking place on Friday, Jan. 29. The MTA office will be closed the entire week of Jan. 25-29. Therefore, there will be no *Legislative Report* next week.

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