



WEEKLY LEGISLATIVE REPORT

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Please route to all interested parties in your township.

LEGISLATION LIMITS THE AMOUNT OF LAND THAT THE STATE CAN OWN

Legislation that would limit the amount of property that could be owned by the State of Michigan received a hearing this week, just a day after it was introduced, in the Senate Natural Resources, Environment and Great Lakes Committee. SB 248, sponsored by Sen. Tom Casperson (R-Fremont Twp.), was introduced on March 9. The bill would cap state land ownership at 4,475,000 acres and would require the Department of Natural Resources to post (and maintain) on its website the number of acres of land owned by the state. However, according to the sponsor, the state could still buy new parcels of land, as long as it stayed within the cap. The state would likely have to sell off some of the land it currently owns as the bill attempts to capture the current number of acres owned by the state. MTA testified in favor of the bill mainly because the state has demonstrated through years of cuts to PILT and the Swamp Tax program that it cannot meet its financial obligations that go with owning so much land.

SENATE DISCUSSES ETHANOL PRODUCTION ON THE FARM

The Senate Agricultural Committee took testimony this week on legislation that would encourage the placement of smaller scale ethanol production facilities on farms. SB 46, offered by Sen. Arlan Meekoff (R-Olive Twp.), was originally introduced to allow by right the operation of ethanol production on any land with an agricultural zoning classification. The committee discussed a revised concept that would allow the production facilities after the local government reviewed the project through a special use hearing with again the restriction to lands having an agricultural zoning. The legislation should see further action in coming weeks.

HOUSE COMMITTEE CONSIDERS BILL TO USE COUNTY SURPLUS DOLLARS FOR ROADS

The House Local, Intergovernmental and Regional Affairs Committee this week heard testimony on legislation that would allow a county board of commissioners to transfer surplus general fund dollars to the county road fund. This fund can then be used for the construction, maintenance and repair of highways by a county road commission. This practice had been used in Monroe County and other counties in the past until it was discovered that current state statute does not allow moneys raised by general taxes levied on real and personal property to be diverted to the county road fund. HB 4347, introduced by Rep. Dale Zorn (R-Ida Twp.), would delete this stipulation and make it possible for a county and local units of government to work together to fund road projects. MTA supported the bill in committee. It is anticipated that the committee will report the bill to the House floor next week.

EMERGENCY FINANCIAL MANAGER LEGISLATION NEARS COMPLETION

The legislation that will expand the authority of Emergency Financial Managers (EFMs) is nearing completion of the legislative process. HB 4214 passed the Senate this week on a party-line vote. If the House concurs with all of the amendments that were included by the Senate, the legislation would then be ready for the governor's signature. If the House does not concur, the legislation would likely go to conference committee. The legislation, as passed by the Senate, has been amended to address many of the significant concerns raised by MTA. The legislation would not punish elected officials who are in office at the time an EFM is appointed. The Senate rejected the concept of an EFM being a firm instead of being an individual, and the legislation includes much more transparency than current law.

LOCAL UNIT CENSUS NUMBERS LIKELY TO BE RELEASED DURING WEEK OF MARCH 21

State officials are indicating that the census numbers for Michigan, which will detail the populations for all cities, villages, townships and counties, are likely to be released during the week of March 21. Michigan will be one of the last states to see its detailed numbers. To date, the census has released information on 33 states and is expected to release information on another nine next week. All numbers are required to be made public by April 1.

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