



WEEKLY LEGISLATIVE REPORT

March 25, 2011

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Please route to all interested parties in your township.

GOVERNOR RELEASES DETAILS ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT REFORMS

On Monday, Gov. Rick Snyder delivered his special message on local government reforms. The governor outlined his plan for how those currently receiving statutory revenue sharing can compete for a reduced pot of \$200 million under the new Economic Vitality Incentive Program. The program as proposed would eliminate payments to communities expected to receive \$6,000 or less and implement reforms. The reforms include an effort to embrace accountability and transparency, develop plans to consolidate services and address employee compensation. The governor also indicated support for legislation that would permit the establishment of metropolitan government (combining county and city government), binding arbitration reforms and changes to the Public Employment Relations Act (PARA). The governor also indicated support for legislation to address unfunded mandates. His proposal would establish and require a fiscal note process to be developed by the House and Senate fiscal agencies for legislation impacting local units of government. If the legislation imposes new, costly requirements on local governments without complying with the fiscal note process (provide funding), the legislation would have no force or effect on local units. A document highlighting the governor's message can be found at www.michigantownships.org.

HOUSE COMPLETES PACKAGE TO MAKE LOCAL SERVICE CONSOLIDATION EASIER

On Thursday, the full House voted 63-47 along party lines to pass a package of bills to make service consolidation easier between two or more local units of government. The package (HBs 4309-4312), amends several acts to help remove barriers regarding seniority and benefit levels an employee has obtained prior to consolidation and removes language that no employee can be placed "in any worse position" once a service consolidation has been established. Democrats opposed the package as an attack on workers' collective bargaining rights. The bills now go over to the Senate for consideration.

CENSUS NUMBERS SHOW GENERAL POPULATION GAINS IN TOWNSHIPS

Despite Michigan's overall population loss of 0.6% since 2000, detailed census numbers released earlier this week showed a 6.2% increase of people who reside in townships. State Demographer Ken Darga noted that townships were among the areas that have seen "significant" population growth in the past decade. Geographic regions that saw overall increases include: West Michigan with a growth rate of 6%, Northwest Michigan saw an increase of 5.8% and counties surrounding metropolitan Detroit had an increase of 4%. Geographic regions with decreases include: Northeast Michigan (-3.2%) and the Upper Peninsula (-2%). For further details: www.michigantownships.org.

DEQ SNUFFS OUT OPEN BURNING BAN SCHEDULED FOR APRIL 1

On Tuesday, DEQ Director Dan Wyant sent a formal communication to the Office of the Great Seal requesting the department be allowed to retract for further review its proposed rule banning the open burning of household waste. This action assures that the open burning ban scheduled to go into effect on April 1 will not occur. However, the department intends to reconvene its workgroup on the issue and host a series of meetings around the state this summer with the hope of submitting a revised rule for consideration this fall. Meanwhile, legislative efforts to prohibit the department from promulgating rules on the issue will likely cease at least for the time being.

HOUSE COMMITTEE REPORTS DRUG FORFEITURE BILL

The House Judiciary Committee approved a bill this week that allows local governments more flexibility on how they can use the proceeds obtained from the sale of property forfeited for crimes involving controlled substances. HB 4349, sponsored by Rep. Kurt Heise (R-Plymouth Twp.), still requires that drug-related proceeds are to be used for law enforcement purposes but expands its use to go beyond current limits that allow it to only be used related to law enforcement for controlled substance violations. MTA supports the legislation.

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