



WEEKLY LEGISLATIVE REPORT

April 9, 2010

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Please route to all interested parties in your township.

GOVERNOR SIGNS TIMBER CUTOVER MILLAGE EXEMPTION

The governor signed legislation this week that would allow homeowners that also own adjacent lands that are classified as timber cutover property to receive the lower homestead millage rate on the timber cutover property. PA 17 of 2010, authored by Rep. Mike Lahti (D-Hancock), resolves an unusual situation in the current property tax law. Property tax law has always allowed a homeowner to receive a break on contiguous parcels to their homestead if the property was also considered residential, but the law specified that it must be classified as residential to be considered. Timber cutover status is used in some parts of the state to classify large undeveloped wooded areas. The use of this classification has greatly diminished over the last decade. However, this decision made by an assessor created a disparity on the potential levy of an extra 18 mills. This legislation eliminates this discrepancy and allows for a refund of taxes paid in certain cases.

NEW LAW RETAINS ERROR AND OMISSION DECISIONS AT BOARDS OF REVIEW

July and December boards of review have been given the permanent authority to deal with certain assessing errors. Two years ago, the Legislature authorized the board of review to deal with assessing errors during the July and December boards of review. This allowed the boards to correct quantifiable errors, such as mistakes in measuring or calculation errors. However, this change to law was only allowed to take place for a two year trial run. PA 24, offered by Rep. Kate. Ebli (D-Frenchtown Chtr. Twp.), makes the change permanent. This law will help insure that a property owner is not required to pay extra taxes because of a simple mistake made by an assessor. This law does not allow someone to simply contest their valuation again during one of these boards. An actual error must be identified and corrected, which would result in an adjusted taxable or assessed value.

NEW FEDERAL JOBS BILL LATEST STIMULUS FOCUS IN CONGRESS

The Local Jobs for America Act, H.R. 4812, introduced by Congressman George Miller (D-CA), would provide \$75 billion for localities to hire or retain employees. Under the proposed legislation, \$52.5 billion would be for communities with at least 50,000 in population and \$22.5 billion would be for those communities with fewer than 50,000 residents. The bill anticipates that funds would be distributed to the larger communities based on the Community Development Block Grant Formula with funding to smaller communities handled through an application process through each state. MTA and the National Association of Towns and Townships (NATaT) are proposing that the distribution for smaller communities be replaced by the formula contained in H.R. 3007, introduced by Congressman Paul Kanjorski (D-PA), to allow smaller communities to access funding directly. H.R. 3007 is modeled after the federal General Revenue Sharing Program that was in place from 1972-1986, which made federal funds available for local government services. This program would be especially beneficial to smaller communities that did not reap their fair share of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funding. As this issue heats up, MTA and NATaT will be requesting your assistance in reaching members of Congress to express support for the distribution formula contained in H.R. 3007.

WIND COUNCIL TO MEET IN ESCANABA

The Michigan Great Lakes Wind Council will hold a meeting in Escanaba on Wednesday, April 14. The wind council is an advisory body appointed by Gov. Jennifer Granholm that studies various issues related to wind energy development within our state. This meeting will focus on offshore wind energy. The meeting will take place at Danforth Place, 4989 Danforth Road, Escanaba. There will be an open house starting at 6 p.m. and presentations will begin at 7 p.m. opportunities for discussion will occur after presentations. The meeting will conclude at 9 p.m. No RSVP is required but the room will only accommodate approximately 250 individuals.

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