



WEEKLY LEGISLATIVE REPORT

May 7, 2010

MTA Phone: 517-321-6467 MTA Fax: 517-321-8908

MTA Web site: www.michigantownships.org

Please route to all interested parties in your township.

HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS APPROVES NEW CONSUMER-GRADE FIREWORKS

Two bills approved by the House Appropriations Committee on Wednesday would allow for the sale of “consumer-grade” fireworks in Michigan for the first time, while creating a revenue stream for firefighter training funding. HBs 5999 and 6000 would allow for the sale and use of fireworks that produce a visible (aerial) effect, but are lower in strength and effect than class B fireworks typically used in municipal fireworks displays around July 4 festivities. Laws regulating fireworks in Michigan have seen little change since the 1930s and only allow for the sale and use of class C fireworks (sparklers, caps, fountains, toy snakes and toy smoke devices) if a local government grants a permit to a fireworks dealer for the purpose of public displays. The bills, approved on a 22-2 vote, only allow for the sale of the higher-grade fireworks in stores no smaller than 3,000 square feet that are equipped with proper fire suppression (sprinklers) devices and meet codes. Only charity organizations could continue to sell the lower-grade fireworks out of tents. The bills require retailers selling the fireworks to pay a \$5,000 license fee with a renewal fee of \$2,500 per year. The majority of the new revenue would be directed to the state’s Bureau of Fire Services to help fund training and inspections.

LOCAL OPTION BAR TAX DISCUSSED

The House Tax Policy Committee took testimony this week on legislation that would allow local governments to impose a local option tax on liquor sold by the glass. The legislation was introduced by Rep. Marie Donigan (D-Royal Oak). HB 5059 would allow a community to impose a tax of up to 50 cents per glass for liquor sold at bars within the community. The issue of taxing liquor sales could only be initiated by a petition of the citizens. Royal Oak has a thriving entertainment district within the city and could see significant revenue if this type of tax were imposed. However, the issue of how liquor licenses can be sold to a bar outside the community that issued the license became an issue. It was noted that many communities have lost licenses to such sales and would be at a disadvantage to use this proposal as a revenue source.

MANDATES PACKAGE GETS ATTENTION IN HOUSE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE

The House Judiciary Committee took testimony about strengthening Michigan’s unfunded mandate laws in front of a packed committee room on Wednesday. A package of bills (HBs 5797 and 5799-5801) introduced in February would create a Local Government Mandate Panel that would determine if new legislation would result in unfunded mandates for local governments. It is proposed that the new panel would be uncompensated (other than travel expenses) and would meet quarterly, unless needed more often. The new panel would be advisory only and would be made up of state and local officials (including a representative of township government). Rep. Mark Meadows (D-East Lansing), who serves as the House Judiciary Committee chair, said there would be additional workgroup meetings on the legislation prior to committee action.

HOUSE COMMITTEE MOVES PACKAGE TO ELIMINATE LOCAL BOARD OF CANVASSERS

On Wednesday, the House Ethics & Elections Committee reported a package of bills to eliminate local boards of canvassers and transfer those functions to the county. HBs 6031-6033 were introduced by Reps. Jennifer Haase (D-Richmond), Lisa Brown (D-West Bloomfield Chtr. Twp.), and Bill Rogers (R-Genoa Twp.), respectively. The package has little impact on most township operations as the canvassing function is already conducted by the county clerk. The committee is also considering HB 6030, also introduced by Rep. Lisa Brown. Under the bill, an absent voter (AV) counting board would not be treated as a separate precinct and results from AV counting boards would be combined with the results of the appropriate precinct. The legislation is an effort to reduce printing and related costs. The bill has not yet been reported from committee due to concerns it would increase costs for the city of Detroit.

END