



WEEKLY LEGISLATIVE REPORT

June 4, 2010

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Please route to all interested parties in your township.

HOUSE COMMITTEE CONSIDERS LAW ENFORCEMENT DEFINITION BILLS

On Wednesday, the House Judiciary Committee heard testimony from supporters of legislation that would alter a recent rule adopted by the Michigan Commission on Law Enforcement Standards (MCOLES) to require a law enforcement officer to work a minimum of 520 hours per year to be considered regularly employed. The rule is currently scheduled to go into effect after 2012. SB 449, introduced by Sen. Cameron Brown (R-Fawn River Twp.), which has already passed the Senate; and HBs 4779 and 5040, introduced by Rep. Geoff Hansen (R-Hart Twp.), would change the requirement to a minimum of 120 hours per year. Several police chiefs from smaller communities, including Police Chief David Elwell of Columbia Township (Jackson Co.), testified in support of the legislation as many smaller communities rely on part-time or retired police officers to protect their citizens and to work special events. HB 4779 would also set up a waiver process for those communities that would be harmed by the annual hour requirement, but some expressed concern that MCOLES might not grant the waiver. MTA has worked diligently to move the legislation forward as the new rule would be very harmful to many townships. MTA believes the best approach is for the state to leave the minimum hours worked at zero. The committee is expected to take further testimony on the legislation in the coming weeks before taking a vote. It should be noted that only one other state, Idaho, has a requirement to be considered regularly employed. Idaho's standard is set at 120 hours.

HOUSE COMMITTEE CONSIDERING PACKAGE TO ALLOW ORV USE ALONG ALL ROADS

The House Tourism, Outdoor Recreation and Natural Resources Committee has been considering a package of bills that would allow for the use of off-road vehicles (ORVs) on all public roads, anywhere in the state, including state highways. The comprehensive package (HBs 6159-6162) amends the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act to not only expand the use of ORVs to all roads but also redefine ORVs as OHVs or off-highway vehicles. The bills create an OHV fund where new annual trail permits, to replace current ORV licenses, would be deposited. The new trail permits essentially double the current license amount. The bills would also increase a number of fines related to OHVs and direct the revenue to the new OHV fund. Current law allows townships and counties north of a line stretching from Mason County to Bay County (including Bay Co.) and in the counties of Huron, Tuscola, Sanilac, Saginaw, Gratiot, Montcalm and St. Clair to open up local and county roads to ORV use by ordinance. The committee has its third hearing on the topic scheduled for June 9.

HOUSE COMMITTEE HEARS TESTIMONY ON SPEED LIMIT LEGISLATION

Speed limit legislation, which according to the sponsor is designed to discourage speed traps by state and local police, received a hearing in the House Urban Policy Committee on Tuesday. HBs 6164 and 6165, sponsored by Rep. Bettie Cook Scott (D-Detroit) and Rep. Rick Jones (R-Oneida Chtr. Twp.), make numerous changes to the MI Vehicle Code and are not as simple as portrayed by the sponsors and supporters (MI State Police). MTA, MML and others are opposed to the legislation.

MTA-PAC QUESTIONNAIRES DUE SOON

Following the candidate withdrawal deadline on May 14, all state legislative candidates were mailed a MTA-PAC questionnaire asking their opinion on 20 key issues important to MTA and townships alike. Those questionnaires are due June 14. A questionnaire was also sent to all township officials asking for input on all candidates running for the state Senate and state House in their legislative districts. The questionnaire asks each township official for specific input on each candidate, as well as thoughts on which House and Senate candidate should receive the MTA-PAC endorsement. If you have not yet returned your PAC questionnaire, please do so soon. The deadline for returning the township official questionnaire to MTA is also Monday, June 14. Township officials' input is critical to the deliberations of the MTA-PAC Committee.

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