



MICHIGAN TOWNSHIPS ASSOCIATION

WEEKLY LEGISLATIVE REPORT

July 11, 2008

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Please route to all interested parties in your township.

PETITION SIGNATURES TURNED IN FOR STATE GOVERNMENT REFORM PROPOSAL

Signatures for a controversial ballot proposal that proposes drastic reforms to state government were turned into the secretary of state this week to get the measure on the Nov. 4 General Election ballot. Supporters of the plan turned in roughly 487,000 signatures, while 380,126 valid signatures are needed to put the proposal on the ballot. The proposal called "Reform Michigan Government Now," which has been under the political radar and has caught many involved in state government politics by surprise, is being packaged as an effort to reduce the size of the Legislature and legislative pay but proposes sweeping changes to the state constitution. It would reduce the State Senate from 38 to 28 members, the House from 110 to 82 members, the Supreme Court from seven to five justices and the state appeals court from 28 to 21 judges; while adding 10 judges to the lower court. It would also limit retirement benefits for all state elected officials and cut the salaries of lawmakers, the governor, lieutenant governor, attorney general and secretary of state by 25% and Supreme Court justices and other judges by 15%. It also sets up a nine-member commission for legislative redistricting. The proposal also cuts state government from 20 departments to 18. Further, the ballot proposal makes significant changes in the voting process and would establish no reason absentee voting as a constitutional right. It also moves all state election administration duties from the secretary of state to a new agency within the Executive Office. Post election audits of election results would be required and a paper trail for any election devices that are used. MTA has concerns with language that would prohibit all local clerks from endorsing any candidate or ballot proposal in any election that they administer. Many groups in Lansing are lining up opposed to this ballot proposal, including the Michigan Chamber of Commerce. This proposal may face legal challenges charging that it makes overly broad changes to our state constitution (more than a single amendment). The State Board of Canvassers is expected to meet in late August to begin the review process related to this proposal.

GOVERNOR SIGNS PUBLICATION SUMMARY BILL INTO LAW

Gov. Jennifer Granholm has signed into law HB 6121, legislation to allow a municipal authority created under PA 233 of 1955 to publish in the newspaper a summary of its rules and regulations rather than the entire document. The bill was introduced by Rep. Tom Pearce (R-Cannon Twp.) to alleviate the need for the North Kent Sewer Authority to publish in full its new rules and regulations about use, connections and rates but applies to all such municipal authorities. The summary needs to be clear and nontechnical in nature and the authority would need to designate where a complete copy could be reviewed or obtained. The bill now becomes PA 172 of 2008 and has immediate effect.

STATE AWARDING GRANTS FOR REGIONAL COOPERATION

The Michigan Center for Regional Excellence has announced that they are accepting proposals for at least eight grants, each of which may be for up to \$25,000, in order to promote regional cooperation between governmental units. Townships can find information related to the request for proposal by visiting the MTA website at www.michigantownships.org. This year, projects that encourage economic development involving regional cooperation will receive special attention. A special conference call is scheduled for 11 a.m. on July 22 for any community that may have questions about the grant program. Proposals must be submitted to the state by Sept. 3 and grants will be awarded in October. Contact MTA Legislative Liaison Bill Anderson at 517-321-6467 for more details.

SUBMIT POLICY RESOLUTIONS TO MTA FOR 2009

Do you have a good policy idea for township government? MTA is now accepting resolutions from member townships and county chapters for presentation at the 2009 MTA Annual Meeting, to be held on Friday, Jan. 30, 2009. The deadline for submittal is Sept. 3, 2008. For additional information, contact MTA Legislative Liaison David Bertram at 517-321-6467 or at david@michigantownships.org.

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