



WEEKLY LEGISLATIVE REPORT

August 7, 2009

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Please route to all interested parties in your township

MTA OFFERS COMMENTS ON SPEAKER'S HEALTH INSURANCE CONCEPT

MTA received a communication this week from Speaker of the House Andy Dillon's office asking for comments regarding a proposal to bring all governmental employees in the state into a single health insurance system administered at the state level. The request was accompanied by some research performed by the Legislative Service Bureau regarding similar concepts that exist in other states. It should be noted that all the states created voluntary options for local governments to participate in state plans. MTA would like to see options opened to local governments in the procurement of health insurance for its employees and appreciates any efforts that could produce cost savings. At the same time, there is concern if any plan requires local governments to participate, that it results in higher costs to the local government. Ease of administration, how any proposal interacts with union contracts and PA 312 negotiations are paramount issues for any health plan. At this point, the proposal has not gone beyond the concept stage. This means all comments are going to be very broad in nature. This also means that it will be some time before legislation with more specifics can be evaluated.

EARLY REVENUE ESTIMATES FOR JULY STILL SHORT OF EXPECTATIONS

Unfortunately, preliminary figures for revenues collected by the state of Michigan in July aren't meeting expectations. An official with the Senate Fiscal Agency is stating that total collections for July will be \$40-\$50 million below estimates that were just made in May 2009. Even the Cash for Clunkers program at the end of July wasn't enough to stop the shortfall. The months of continued revenue declines will be calculated into state budget negotiations taking place amongst the governor and legislative leaders.

LEGISLATION INTRODUCED TO EXEMPT AGRICULTURAL TOURISM BUILDINGS FROM CODE

A bill introduced in the Michigan House on Aug. 4 would exempt buildings "primarily used for agricultural tourism" for a period of 30 days in a calendar year to be exempt from fire sprinkler systems if the owner of the building receives written approval from either the state fire marshal or the fire department in the community where the building is located. The bill, introduced by Rep. Cindy Denby (R-Handy Twp.), is significant in that it attempts to define "agricultural tourism" for the first time in Michigan law; a term that will likely be used for future exemptions. The bill defines agricultural tourism as "the practice of visiting an agribusiness, horticultural, or agricultural operation, including, but not limited to, a farm, orchard, or winery or a companion animal or livestock show, for the purpose of recreation, education, or active involvement in the operation, other than as a contractor or employee of the operation." It should be noted that the 30-day provision is not found in the agricultural tourism definition but in another part of the bill.

MDA SEEKING PUBLIC INPUT ON GAAMPS

The Department of Agriculture is seeking comments on proposed changes to generally accepted agricultural management practices. A public comment session is set for August 19 at 8:30 a.m. in the Lake Superior Room, Michigan Library and Historical Center, 702 West Kalamazoo St., Lansing. Use the following link to find the GAAMPs, http://www.michigan.gov/mda/0,1607,7-125-1567_1599_1605---,00.html.

HAVE YOU EVER WANTED TO ATTEND AN MTA BOARD MEETING?

The MTA Board of Directors will be holding their August Board meeting on Wednesday, Aug. 12, 9 a.m. to noon at the Bavarian Inn and Conference Center in Frankenmuth. The meeting is being held in conjunction with the MTA Summer Legislative Conference. Board members are inviting township officials to attend the August Board meeting. Please feel free to take advantage of this unique opportunity and learn more about what the MTA Board does for you and the MTA organization. Due to the conference, **there will be no *Weekly Legislative Report* next week.**

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