



MICHIGAN TOWNSHIPS ASSOCIATION

WEEKLY LEGISLATIVE REPORT

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Please route to all interested parties in your township.

RECORD VOTER REGISTRATIONS IN MICHIGAN

Secretary of State Terri Lynn Land this week reported that 7.47 million people in Michigan are registered to vote heading into the Nov. 4 general election. That amounts to 98 percent of the state's voting age population. An additional 330,000 voters have been registered since January and 200,000 of those have registered since July. The increase in registrations raised Michigan's percentage of registered voters to a new record level of 98 percent. The previous record level of 95 percent was reached in 2004. Secretary Land has also filed notice that she will appeal a recent federal court ruling that questioned how the MI Department of State removes the names of some voters from the Qualified Voter File. She has also asked the U.S. District Court (lower court) to delay implementation of the order until the case is resolved. In question are roughly 5,500 voter registrations whose voter identification cards were returned by the U.S. Post Office as undeliverable. The District Court ruled that removing those voters violates federal election law.

BILL TO LIMIT COUNTY 911 CHARGES SCHEDULED FOR HOUSE COMMITTEE

The House Energy and Technology Committee is scheduled to meet on Nov. 6 to address legislation that could negatively impact funding for county 911 emergency service operations. The Emergency 911 Service Enabling Act permits counties to impose a 911 charge through the adoption of a resolution, a property tax millage with voter approval or a combination of the two. The bill, sponsored by Rep. Jeff Mayes (D-Bangor Chtr. Twp.), would only allow a phone surcharge for 911 services if the county commission received approval from both the Michigan Public Service Commission (MPSC) and the voters of the county. The bill would also subject the county 911 charge to annual review by the MPSC. Each year, counties would be required to submit financial information to the MPSC to enable it to review whether the 911 charge generates more than the amount initially approved by voters. The bill would give the MPSC the authority to reduce the surcharge in such circumstances. This scenario effectively nullifies local control by eliminating the ability of locally elected commissioners to assess their county needs and adopt a resolution that appropriates adequate, sustainable funding. HB 6070 allows a state bureaucracy to determine what's in the best interest of the community, potentially jeopardizing the first-line of defense against emergencies. MTA agrees that counties must be able to fund a minimum level of safety by resolution, to avoid the danger of rejection by voters and collapse of the system. The bill also causes concern that voters shouldn't be prevented from voicing approval for a 911 system with upgraded features, above the minimum level of funding. MTA is concerned that HB 6070 creates a precedent for the state to review collection levels of local millages and to make determinations about reducing them. MTA opposes HB 6070. Committee Chairman Frank Accavitti (D-Eastpointe) has been working tirelessly for weeks to find an acceptable compromise, and should be recognized for his efforts.

LAME-DUCK LEGISLATIVE SESSION SCHEDULE

Fresh off campaigning, Michigan legislators will waste little time in getting back to Lansing. The Senate is scheduled to return to session on Wednesday, Nov. 5, the day after the election, while the House has listed the day as a tentative session day. Both have scheduled session on Thursday, Nov. 6, as well. The often unpredictable lame-duck session, that concludes legislative activity in the 2007-08 session before the end of the year, could see as few as six session days for the House and seven for the Senate. Both bodies have scheduled enough tentative session days to bring the number of lame-duck session days to 13 in each chamber. The schedules indicate the latest possible session date would be Dec.18.

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