



WEEKLY LEGISLATIVE REPORT

November 6, 2009

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Please route to all interested parties in your township.

ELECTRONIC BALLOTS FOR MILITARY AND OVERSEAS VOTERS BILL PASSED BY HOUSE

On Wednesday, the House passed legislation that would make it easier for military and overseas voters to participate in the election process by allowing clerks to send them electronic voter registration applications and absentee voter (AV) ballot applications and ballots. HB 5279, introduced by Rep. Vincent Gregory (D-Southfield), would allow a county, city, village or township clerk to transmit a voter registration or AV ballot application and ballot to an applicant's electronic mail address upon request. The voter would then return the AV ballot by U.S. mail to the appropriate clerk. The legislation is an effort to address the timeliness of overseas AV ballots being returned to clerks on or before Election Day. HB 5279 mirrors legislation that recently passed Congress to allow members of the military and overseas voters to designate how they want to receive voter registration and AV ballot applications and ballots—either by mail or electronically—for federal elections. HB 5279 would make all state and local elections consistent with the new federal law.

SENATE REACTION TO COOPERATIVE GOVERNMENT: DON'T DO IT!

A simple piece of legislation was introduced at the beginning of the year. Sen. John Gleason, (D-Flushing), offered SB 222, which would allow school districts to join with municipalities in forming recreational authorities. Current law does not allow this partnership to be formed. Who could oppose such a simple piece of legislation that would help avoid duplication of services that would mostly benefit our children? It seems the same people who are the most vocal about local government becoming more efficient by consolidating services and establishing cooperative agreements are standing in the way of this legislation being enacted into law. The legislation passed the Senate on a unanimous vote. It then passed the House on a very close vote as opposition mounted. All that is required to make this law is for the Senate to transmit the bill to the governor for signature. However, the legislation has been sitting in the Senate since May awaiting that final procedural step.

PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION TO HOLD HEARING ON WIND TURBINE ZONING SETBACKS

The MI Public Service Commission (MPSC) will hold a public hearing at 11 a.m. on Monday, Nov. 23 to solicit public comments on the effect of wind turbine setback requirements and noise limitations under local zoning or other ordinances on wind energy development in wind energy resource zones. The hearing will take place in Lansing at the MPSC's office, with satellite locations in Bad Axe and Traverse City taking part electronically. The public hearing will take place at the commission's Lansing office, located at 6545 Mercantile Way. People may also participate by electronic means at the Huron Area Technical Center, located at 1160 S. Van Dyke Rd. in Bad Axe; and in room 215/217 of the University Center at the Boardman Lake Campus of Northwestern Michigan College, located at 2200 Dendrinos Dr. in Traverse City. Written and electronic comments may be submitted with the MPSC no later than 5 p.m. on Dec. 11. Written comments should be sent to: Executive Secretary, Michigan Public Service Commission, P.O. Box 30221, Lansing, MI 48909 and will also be accepted on-site. They may also be e-mailed to mpscdockets@michigan.gov. All comments should reference Case No. U-15899. The hearing is required under PA 295 of 2008, also known as the Clean, Renewable and Efficient Energy Act.

MTA TESTIFIES ON SPEAKER DILLON'S HEALTH PLAN

MTA provided testimony this week regarding HB 5345, which would require all public employees to receive their health care insurance from a single state system. Bill Anderson, legislative liaison for MTA, concluded that while the plan has elements worthy of consideration, "The state doesn't need to mandate local governments to participate in this program to successfully implement the plan as I have heard it described. State government receives no direct benefit from the mandate. If this plan is as good as advertised, local township employees will be knocking on your door to join."

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