



## WEEKLY LEGISLATIVE REPORT

December 5, 2008

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Please route to all interested parties in your township.

### **HOUSE APPROVES EARLY VOTING LEGISLATION**

Following action earlier in the week by the House Ethics and Elections Committee, the full House approved legislation, with a 58-50 vote, to require early voting on the Friday, Saturday and Monday prior to each election. While improvements were made to the original version of HB 4090, introduced by Rep. Aldo Vagnozzi (D-Farmington Hills), MTA remained opposed to the legislation over cost and logistical issues. Prior to House passage, minor changes were made to the bill in committee. The first amendment expands the minimum eight hour early voting requirement for the Friday and Monday before each election to include Saturday. Previously, each local clerk would have been able to determine the Saturday hours. Under the bill, clerks would still be able to offer additional hours for early voting on Friday, Saturday or Monday beyond the eight hour minimum. The second amendment eliminated the requirement that early voting ballots could not be counted until the close of polls on election-day, which was an improvement. Despite the fact that MTA was prepared to testify against the bill in committee, testimony was not taken from MTA or any other organizations wishing to comment. The chair alluded to time constraints and that testimony had previously been taken on the issue. MTA offers our thanks to township officials who expressed concern to representatives over the bill, as well as, to those representatives who voted against the measure. While anything is possible during the lame duck session, it is not anticipated the Senate will address the bill before years-end.

### **SENATE STILL EYEING TOWNSHIP TRUCK ROUTE AUTHORITY?**

No vote was taken this week in the Michigan Senate related to a threat to township truck route ordinance authority. However, that doesn't mean the threat is over. Township officials still have time to contact their senator and should also contact their state representative to ask that they oppose any such effort. Sen. Jud Gilbert (R-Clay Twp.) is looking to insert this issue into an existing transportation bill through the amendment process. The potential amendment would void all existing township truck route ordinances on any county primary road unless approved by the county road commission by April 1, 2009. It would also require that any future township truck route ordinances be approved by county road commissions. The amendment has caused a great deal of discussions amongst senators, but has yet to generate a vote. Sen. Gilbert has considered using HB 4839, an unrelated bill that addresses abandoned vehicles, as it already is sitting on the floor of the Senate and has been previously approved by the House. The Senate could also try to amend other bills with the same amendment. **MTA is asking township officials to immediately contact their senator and state representative to ask that they oppose the amendment that would negatively affect the ability of townships to maintain their current truck routes and establish new ones in the future.** MTA also asks that you watch for urgent alerts from MTA over the next 10 days as the lame duck session winds down. Use the following link for legislator contact information [www.senate.michigan.gov](http://www.senate.michigan.gov) and [www.house.michigan.gov](http://www.house.michigan.gov).

### **LEGISLATURE CONSIDERS PROPERTY TAX EXEMPTIONS**

Among the many pieces of legislation that are being considered by the Legislature during the lame duck session are bills that would either create property tax exemptions or expand exemptions for some particular activities. HBs 5677-5679 amend property tax laws and food processing laws to define maple syrup production as an agricultural activity. The legislation would exempt equipment used in the collection of sap and production of the syrup in the same way all agricultural personal property is exempt from taxation. Land used for maple syrup production would also receive an agricultural exemption for school millage purposes if it is not already exempted. HBs 6437 & 6438 impact tax exemptions offered to property owned by Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, YMCAs, YWCAs, Camp Fire Girls and 4-H organizations. Under current law each organization's chapter is allowed to receive a tax exemption on up to 400 acres. Problems have arisen as the national Girl Scout organization has pushed local councils to combine. Michigan will go from having 13 Councils in the state to three. The legislation allows the combined councils to exempt the acreage that was allowed for exemption when they functioned separately.

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