



MICHIGAN TOWNSHIPS ASSOCIATION

WEEKLY LEGISLATIVE REPORT

June 22, 2007

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Please route to all interested parties in your township.

OPPOSITION CONTINUES TO MOUNT ON HB 4780 – TRANSFER OF TWP DUTIES

Many major organizations support MTA's position against HB 4780, legislation to transfer tax collection, election and assessing functions to counties. The Southeast Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG), the Grand Valley Metro Council (GVMC) and most recently the Michigan Farm Bureau have voiced strong opposition to the legislation. The Michigan Association of Counties has also come out opposed to the bill along with numerous individual county boards of commissioners that have already passed resolutions condemning the measure. MTA offers its deep appreciation to all these organizations. Township officials are continuing to contact their legislators to lobby against this senseless proposal and we ask you to keep up your efforts. Meanwhile, MTA has scheduled two informational sessions for township officials to help those of you in the Ypsilanti and Grand Rapids areas have a better understanding of HB 4780. Sessions will take place Monday, June 25, at 2:00 p.m. at the Ypsilanti Charter Township Hall, 7200 South Huron River Drive and Wednesday, June 27, at 1:00 p.m. at the Gaines Charter Township Hall, 8555 Kalamazoo Avenue. Area township officials are encouraged to attend.

HOUSE ETHICS & ELECTIONS COMMITTEE CONSIDERS NO-REASON ABSENTEE VOTING

On Tuesday, the House Ethics & Elections Committee heard testimony on two bills addressing absentee voter (AV) ballots. House Bill 4048, introduced by Rep. Marty Griffin (D-Jackson), would eliminate the restrictions for voting absentee and allow voters to obtain an AV ballot upon request. Otherwise known as no-reason AV balloting, MTA's policy platform has long supported this concept and we expressed support for the legislation before the committee. The committee also heard testimony on HB 4553, introduced by Rep. Marc Corriveau (D-Northville). The bill would allow city, township and village clerks to mail absent voter ballot application forms to qualified and registered electors 60 years of age or older. MTA also supports this legislation. The bill would solve a problem created in the Detroit primary election in 2005 when the former Detroit city clerk mailed out applications, against a court order, to all registered voters 60 and over. HB 4553 would permit, but not require, clerks to mail applications to those 60 and over even if not requested to do so by the voter. Both bills could be voted on during next week's committee meeting.

STORM WATER PHASE II LEGISLATION PASSES SENATE COMMITTEE

The Senate Natural Resources and Environmental Affairs Committee gave final approval to SB 545. The bill, introduced by Sen. Mark Jansen (R-Gaines Charter Twp.), would stipulate that a municipality that is determined not to be an "owner/operator" of a separate storm sewer system would not be required to obtain a permit or pay an annual storm water discharge permit fee to the DEQ under the Storm Water Phase II program. The bill now moves to the full Senate.

MERS LOBBYING TO ENHANCE PENSIONS AT TOWNSHIP'S EXPENSE

The Michigan Municipal Employee Retirement System (MERS), which operates pension plans for many local governments in Michigan, is lobbying local units to oppose HB 4487, which would reverse a recent Supreme Court decision that granted an exemption to property taxes on property held by the pension plans for investment purposes. MTA, the Michigan Municipal League and Michigan Association of Counties are at odds with MERS over this issue. MTA, MML and MAC believe that MERS should not qualify for a property tax exemption simply because their clients are local governments. Should the court decision stand, townships where investment property is located and its residents must make up for the lost taxes in order to pad the rate of return on pension funds for other communities. MTA urges support of HB 4487, offered by Rep. Rick Jones (R-Oneida Chtr. Twp.), to return all pension plans to an equal footing under property tax laws.

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