



MICHIGAN TOWNSHIPS ASSOCIATION

WEEKLY LEGISLATIVE REPORT

June 29, 2007

MTA Phone: 517-321-6467

MTA FAX: 517-321-8908

Please route to all interested parties in your township.

CONTINUE TO KEEP THE PRESSURE ON REGARDING HB 4780

The Michigan Legislature is poised to take a week-long break beginning this weekend. Following that, shortened session weeks will continue through most of the summer with the primary emphasis centering on the 2008 budget. This legislative break creates an excellent opportunity to meet with your state officials, in their districts, to explain in person that HB 4780 doesn't save money and reduces access to local services for township residents. In addition to talking with your lawmakers, continue to communicate with your county officials to voice your opposition to HB 4780. Your hard work is making a difference.

WHEN WILL MICHIGAN CHOOSE PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES?

Under current statute, Michigan is required to hold its presidential primaries on February 26 of next year. However, many political leaders in the state want Michigan to be more influential in selecting the next president and want Michigan to move up its selection process. Michigan Democrats are currently focusing on having their statewide caucuses on Saturday, February 9. Michigan Republicans would like to have their primary on Tuesday, February 5, the earliest date allowed by national parties without being penalized. Legislation was introduced this week to establish the presidential primary on Tuesday, January 29. Several states are contemplating elections earlier than allowed by national parties to minimize the impact of New Hampshire and Iowa on the selection process. Michigan could still decide to use only caucus meetings instead of primaries. Stay tuned.

HOUSE MUDDIES WATERS ON ROAD END ISSUE

The House of Representatives passed two bills this week designed to deal with the issue of roads that dead end into inland lakes. This situation has resulted in many lawsuits across the state where these road ends are often treated like parks or even marinas. The courts have ruled that while these areas do afford an opportunity for people to access the lake, they may not be used for more permanent activities, such as building a dock or mooring boats. HBs 4463 and 4464 were approved by narrow margins in the House this week. The bills will allow the establishment of public marinas under certain circumstances. MTA policy supports the current court interpretation of the use of road ends and opposed HBs 4463 and 4464. It is believed that these bills will simply reignite the battles over road end use and result in yet another round of court actions involving the property rights of the lake shore owners for the easement area.

SENATE PASSES CAFO PACKAGE/HOUSE TO DELIBERATE OVER COMING WEEKS

The Senate recently passed a package of controversial bills addressing concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs). The package includes SBs 447 and 448, as well as SBs 501-504. At issue is whether operators of CAFOs should have the choice of participating in the Department of Agriculture's (DOA) Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program (MAEAP) or going through a DEQ permit process, which is currently scheduled to go into affect July 1. The legislative package would give operators the choice. Most CAFO operators favor MAEAP, a voluntary environmental assurance program administered by DOA, whereas the permitting procedure is a regulatory program administered by DEQ. While the package does contain penalty provisions for discharges from CAFOs, many argue those provisions are not as stringent as those under a permit. SB 502, which would prohibit DEQ from responding to anonymous complaints about CAFOs, did not move forward. In separate action, the House Agriculture Committee also reported HB 4685, legislation requiring DOA and DEQ to develop a booklet outlining all environmental laws and regulations pertaining to farm operations. The House Committee is expected to deliberate over the coming weeks on other aspects of the Senate CAFO package. Meanwhile, another package of bills (HBs 4983-4992) was introduced this week in the House to address the CAFO issue.

END