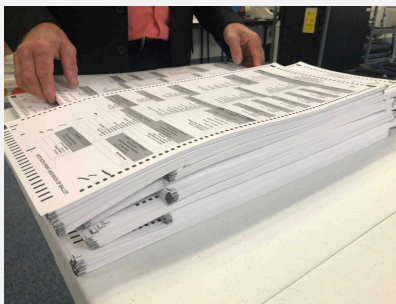


March 13, 2026

Bill restricting millage questions to November election passes first chamber

Any taxing authority—including townships—would be limited to when they place millage questions before voters, which fund essential services like public safety, libraries, parks and transit, under legislation passed by the House this week. [House Bill 4583](#) would amend the General Property Tax Act to stipulate that a taxing unit could only put a millage question on a regular November ballot. MTA opposed the legislation, which limits the ability of local units of government to respond to township needs in a timely manner and creates longer ballots, increasing voter fatigue. The bill was approved alongside [HB 4584](#), which would place the same restriction on school districts. The bills now move to the Senate for consideration.



Proposal to move August primary to May clears committee

Legislation to move the statewide August primary election to May, with a February election date option was approved by a Senate committee Wednesday. [Senate Bill 691](#), sponsored by Sen. Sam Singh (D-East Lansing), would set the primary election on the first Tuesday after the first Monday in May, eliminate the August election and reinstate an election on the fourth Tuesday in February. Currently, a February election only occurs in a presidential primary year when Michigan has a presidential primary. Additional bills in the package would move up election filing dates, update campaign finance filing deadlines and align petition thresholds for statewide candidates without party affiliation in compliance with a federal court ruling. If signed into law, the legislation would take effect on Jan. 1, 2027. The bills await a vote by the full chamber.

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March 17: [2026 MTA Capital Conference](#)

March 18: *Now You Know* lunchtime webinar [Squeaky Wheel Maintenance: Using Policies to Turn Complaints into Constructive Input](#)

April 8: *Now You Know* lunchtime webinar [What Your Township Needs to Know About Franchises](#)

April 20-23: Registration is open for [MTA's 2026 Annual Educational Conference & Expo](#) at the Grand Traverse Resort

May 6, 13, & 18: [Planning & Zoning Primer](#)

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Unchecked expansion of shooting ranges approved by House

A bill opposed by MTA that would expand liability exemptions for sport shooting ranges was approved by the House this week. Under current law, an owner, operator or user of a sport shooting range that conforms to generally accepted operation practices is exempt from civil liability relating to noise, noise pollution or nuisance, provided the range is in compliance with any noise control laws or ordinances that applied to it at the time of its construction or initial operation. According to [House Bill 4949](#), sponsored by Rep. Jennifer Wortz (R-Quincy Twp.), these exemptions would continue to apply if the range was modified or expanded. MTA raised concerns with the bill sponsor that expansion without limits could cause issues for local governments and neighbors. MTA will continue to engage with lawmakers on these issues as the bill moves to the Senate.

Legislation allows open-ended residence at Michigan campgrounds

Individuals would be allowed to stay in campgrounds for indefinite periods of time beyond the current six-month limit in areas facing housing shortages, workforce shortages or emergency declarations under a House-approved bill this week. [House Bill 5430](#), sponsored by Rep. Rachelle Smit (R-Wayland Twp.), would amend the Michigan Public Health Code to permit a campground near a community with such a situation to exceed current time limits. MTA is monitoring this proposal as it could blur the line between recreational campgrounds and long-term housing without clear standards to ensure local oversight of safety and infrastructure needs. The bill moves to the Senate for next action.



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House committee approves extensive drone package

A series of bills clarifying where drones cannot be flown, vesting local law enforcement with the authority to enforce aviation laws, and imposing restrictions on the purchase and operation of drones by a public safety agency advanced to the full House. [House Bills 5319](#) and [5320](#) prohibit drones from being piloted from or flown over protected facilities and critical infrastructure such as law enforcement facilities, prisons, electric substations or water treatment plants. Current law only prohibits drone flights if they interfere with operations at a key facility. [HB 5321](#) and [5322](#) would require the Michigan Department of



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* [Consumers Energy](#)

* [Fahey Schultz Burzych Rhodes PLC](#)

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Transportation (MDOT) to create a statewide drone restricted zone database and app containing all areas where drone flight is prohibited and notify drone operators, who would be required to use the database app when flying their drone as they are approaching a restricted area. Additionally, under [HB 5323](#), owners of key facilities and critical infrastructure would be allowed to install a geofencing system around any protected buildings or equipment. [HB 5327](#) deals with nonprotected private property, prohibiting drones from being used for harassing purposes or flying over a private dwelling in a way that prevents the occupant from the quiet enjoyment of the dwelling. The package also includes [HBs 5325](#) and [5326](#), granting authority to local law enforcement to destroy drones posing a public safety risk or violating state or federal guidelines.

Several bills address the authority of public entities to purchase and operate drones. The legislation defines public entities as a “state agency, unit of local government, university, or community college.” [HBs 5328](#), [5329](#), [5330](#) and [5331](#) prohibit public entities from procuring, purchasing, operating or deploying drones that include components manufactured by certain foreign-linked companies found on federally updated national security lists. They additionally tighten cybersecurity standards for how drone owners must manage and secure information. As presented, the bills effectively ban the use of most commercial drones, which currently rely on Chinese components. [HB 5332](#) requires MDOT to create and maintain a public registry of drone ownership and operations, including identifying information and intended use, with annual reporting to the Legislature.

Senate approves expanded DDAs for islands

Townships that have two distinct geographic areas separated by a body of water could soon have statutory clarification to include an island’s downtown in their downtown development authority. [Senate Bill 581](#), sponsored by Sen. Kevin Hertel (D-St. Clair Shores), would allow a municipality’s downtown district to include an island’s downtown even if they are separated from the mainland downtown by a body of water. This would enable municipalities to expand the coverage of their downtown development authorities (DDAs), which use tax increment financing to fund improvements to buildings or infrastructure within downtown districts. The bill’s expansion would help attract businesses to the additional districts, finance desired projects and enable the community to access grants previously unavailable to them. The legislation passed the Senate and was referred to the House Economic Competitiveness Committee for discussion.

Exception for drone surveillance bill passes Senate

In the case of a declared local state of emergency or disaster, local governments would be able to utilize an unmanned aircraft system to inspect a telecommunications tower and execute certain response efforts under legislation passed by the Senate this week. Current law prohibits the use of an unmanned aircraft system to surveil, inspect or collect information about a facility such as a

telecommunications tower facility, grounds, antennae, shelter site or similar infrastructure. [Senate Bill 525](#), sponsored by Sen. Kevin Hertel (D-St. Clair Shores), was introduced to allow the use by specified state departments or agencies to participate in a recovery, assessment or inspection effort in response to a declared state of emergency or disaster. MTA worked to include local states of emergency or disaster. The bill next moves to the House for consideration.

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2024 SBTE reimbursement to locals

Municipalities received notification, along with the issued reimbursements, from the Michigan Department of Treasury this week on the 2024 Small Business Taxpayer Exemption (SBTE); the reimbursements were issued on March 12 (Thursday). The SBTE was expanded in 2023 to include taxpayers that own, lease or possess eligible personal property with a combined true cash value equal to or greater than \$80,000 but less than \$180,000. Treasury calculates and distributes the reimbursements to municipalities for personal property tax revenue lost due to this expanded exemption. Guidance from Treasury outlines eligibility, reimbursement calculations, reports, recording of the reimbursement and timeline. For more information or with questions, visit [Small Business Taxpayer Exemption \(SBTE\) Reimbursements](#) or contact TREAS-ORTA-SBTE@michigan.gov or (517) 335-7484.

BCC guidance on installation of temporary locking devices in child care centers

The state Bureau of Construction Codes (BCC) released [new guidance](#) on the installation of temporary locking devices or system in child care centers. Public Act 60 of 2026, effective on March 25, 2026, requires local fire departments and law enforcement agencies be notified if child care centers in their jurisdiction install temporary locking devices to be used in emergency situations. The operator of a child care center is required to submit to the enforcing agency two copies of the floor plans, drawings, diagrams and installation instructions before it can install a temporary door-locking device or system. Before using a newly installed device or system in the child care center, the center operator must notify the enforcing agency that the device or system is ready for inspection and receive written approval from the agency that the device or system is approved for use. The new law allows child care centers to follow the same procedure as schools when they install the devices.



Public comment opportunity, MDOT long-range plan updates

The statewide long-range transportation plan (SLRTP), known as the Michigan Mobility 2045 (MM2045) plan, will be updated by the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) to reassess its assumptions and align with updated federal requirements. The new [MM2050](#) will extend the planning horizon to 2050 to maintain a 20-year outlook while reflecting changes in Michigan's transportation system over the last five years. MDOT is seeking feedback on the plan updates via virtual webinars and written comments. [Two webinars](#), March 26 from 6 to 7 p.m. and March 27 from 11 a.m. to noon, will include a live presentation followed by an opportunity to provide comments. Submit written comments by April 9 via [MDOT's website](#) or to [MDOT-PublicComments@Michigan.gov](mailto:PublicComments@Michigan.gov).

Reminders for clerks

- **Preregistration mailer:** The state Bureau of Elections (BOE) has sent the annual [preregistration mailer](#) required by [law](#) to 16-17.5 year-olds who have a driver's license but have not currently preregistered to vote. Recipients of the mailer can return it to the secretary of state, use an online preregistration site or use the form to register with their local clerk. Approximately 65,000 mailers were sent, so clerks may experience increased preregistration volume. Additional preregistration guidance is available via BOE's eLearning Center.
 - **Voter information display updates:** An updated poster with information on early and Election Day voting will be provided to county clerks, who will distribute two copies for each precinct and early polling site to all township clerks. The displays must be posted in a conspicuous location in each polling place.
 - **eLearning accounts for new and temporary staff:** As the busy election season approaches, clerks may be onboarding new or temporary staff who require eLearning access. The process begins with submission of an [account request form](#) after which the local clerk receives an email and must reply-all to approve or deny. Once approved by the clerk, the account is created within approximately two business days (may take longer during high-volume periods). Staff needing Qualified Voter File access must create an eLearning account and complete required training first; this manual approval is required for system security.
-

MTA Conference early-bird rates end soon

Early-bird registration rates for [MTA's Annual Conference & Expo](#) end in just 10 days on March 23.

[Register today](#) to lock in the discount and secure your spot to join municipal experts and nearly 1,000 of your fellow officials at the township event of the year. This can't-miss event returns to the Grand Traverse Resort April 20–23, bringing more than 50 educational sessions and 100+ municipal vendors. Don't delay, register today!



Federal updates for week of March 9

Check out the National Association of Towns and Townships [Weekly Legislative Update](#) for the latest on federal actions impacting townships.

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