Michigan Township INSIGHTS

Oct. 2, 2026

Nonpartisan analysis of November statewide ballot proposals



Michigan voters will have two statewide ballot proposals before them on the upcoming Nov. 3 ballot:

- **Proposal 2026-1—**A proposal to convene a constitutional convention for the purpose of drafting a general revision of the state constitution.
- **Proposal 2026-2**—A proposed initiated law to prohibit campaign contributions from certain regulated utilities and government contractors and apply campaign finance laws and regulations to additional types of political communications.

Two nonpartisan organizations have recently released overviews of each of the proposals. The Senate Fiscal Agency (SFA) overview can be viewed at SFA Ballot Proposal 26-1 and SFA Ballot Proposal 26-2. The Citizens Research Council (CRC) analyses can be found at CRC Proposal 2026-1 summary and CRC Proposal 2026-2 summary.

The MTA Board of Directors has taken a position to oppose Proposal 2026-1 and is part of a broad coalition of organizations and advocacy groups working together to urge Michiganders to vote no on whether to convene a Con-Con, which would open Michigan's constitution to a complete rewrite.

Senate approves lengthened appeal time for poverty exemption

Taxpayers could have an additional five days to file a poverty-based property tax exemption appeal with the Michigan Tax Tribunal under legislation approved by the Senate this week. Senate Bill 988, sponsored by Sen. Sylvia Santana (D-Detroit), would extend the appeal clock from 30 days to 35 days, bringing the poverty exemption appeal deadline in line with others such as the agricultural or disabled veterans' exemptions. The bill passed the Senate unanimously and now awaits consideration by the House.

Trial court funding bills advance in Senate

Last week, the Senate Committee on Civil Rights, Judiciary and Public Safety approved three bills that would establish a statewide process for determining indigency. Individuals would qualify based on participation in certain public



UPCOMING MTA TRAINING

This month's Regional Meetings:
· **Oct. 7**, Thompsonville
· **Oct. 8**, Spring Lake
· **Oct. 13**, Gaylord

Oct. 14: *Now You Know* lunchtime webinar Taxation Trouble Spots

Nov. 24 & Dec. 2: Treasurers' Guide to Tax Collection
· **Nov. 24**, Gaylord
· **Dec. 2**, Lansing

Dec. 8 & 9: Winter Academy, Bay Pointe Inn, Shelbyville
· **Dec. 8**, Township Finances
· **Dec. 9**, Fundamentals of Assessment & Taxation

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assistance programs, income thresholds or demonstrated financial hardship. Senate Bills 1089, 1090 and 1091, sponsored by Sens. Stephanie Chang (D-Detroit), John Damoose (R-Harbor Springs), and Mary Cavanagh (D-Redford Chtr. Twp.) respectively, would prohibit courts from imposing certain costs, fees and assessments on indigent defendants, except restitution and crime victim assessments. The legislation does not identify replacement funding or protect local trial courts from potential revenue losses. The legislation responds to the Michigan Supreme Court's 2014 *People v. Cunningham* decision, which held that courts cannot impose costs to fund court operations without statutory authority. The bills would also implement recommendations to exempt indigent defendants from non-victim-related costs and establish a uniform indigency determination process. There are 19 townships that fund their local trial court. The bills now move to the full Senate.



Testimony on bill to modify speed limits on gravel roads

MTA recently supported House Bill 6272 in the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, which would modify speed limits on gravel roads. Under current law, the default speed limit on all county roads with a gravel or unimproved surface is 55 miles per hour, if no other speed limit is established. However, in a county with a population of at least one million, the road commission may lower the speed limit on a segment to 45 miles per hour upon the request of a municipality. The bill would modify the statute to allow a county road commission in a county with a population of at least one million to lower the speed limit on a segment of gravel or unimproved surface to not less than 25 miles per hour upon the request of the municipality. The legislation was opposed by the Michigan State Police and the County Road Association. It is uncertain when the bill will be next considered.

2027 Rural Development Fund letter of intent period open until Nov. 2

The Michigan Office of Rural Prosperity (ORP) has $4 million in grant funding available for projects dedicated to infrastructure, workforce and economic development in rural communities. Grants are available in two categories:

- **Community and Business Development** including grants of up to $100,000 for infrastructure, community facility, workforce and economic development, business development, community planning, and capacity building projects.
- **Regional Collaboration** including grants of up to $200,000 for projects that formalize regional

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partnerships and shared service models to build capacity and address multi-county needs through joint use of staff, expertise and systems.

Townships serving eligible rural areas are encouraged to apply. Detailed program guidelines are available via the ORP website, and letters of intent are due by Nov. 2 with a full application becoming available in December.

High-speed internet is coming to thousands of Michigan households

Soon, nearly everyone in Michigan will have access to high-speed internet. Thanks to the largest federally funded internet expansion in Michigan's history, affordable and reliable internet is on its way. Michigan received $1.559 billion in Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) funding to help close the digital divide by building the infrastructure needed to expand high speed internet access. Township leaders, residents and businesses can check your address on the Michigan Broadband Map and visit the Where Is My Internet website to learn more.



Federal grant opportunities

- **Community and Schools Youth Drug Prevention Program**—The U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) Office of Justice Programs has announced $12 million in competitive funding for community drug prevention programs. Townships are eligible to seek funds that may be used to provide drug prevention programming in school and extracurricular settings in coordination with local law enforcement and community organizations. Applications are due Oct. 29.
- **Patrick Leahy Bulletproof Vest Partnership (BVP) Program** —A second DOJ opportunity is available which can reimburse townships for up to 50% of the cost of bulletproof vests purchased for law enforcement officers. Vests must meet certain criteria related to fit, design standards and be made in the United States. An agency seeking funds must have a written mandatory wear policy for uniformed patrol officers and agencies with overlapping jurisdictions must file a single combined application. Fiscal Year 2026 applications should focus on vests that will be needed over the next two years. To apply, interested agencies must establish an online BVP registration and submit an application. FY26 applications are due Oct. 30.
- **Restoration and Stewardship Assistance for Wetland and Floodplain Easements**—Townships are eligible to seek funding from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Easement Restoration and Stewardship

program. Funding from this program may be used to assess, repair, maintain, manage or enhance wetland reserve and floodplain easements. Applications are due Nov. 19.

Webinar to cover watershed planning grant program

Townships involved in developing or updating their watershed management plans to restore and protect watersheds and enhance water quality could be eligible for grant funding through the nonpoint source program. Join staff from the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy at an informational webinar on Oct. 13 at 1 p.m. to learn about the nonpoint source program priorities, application requirements and other tips.

Member review and input sought for 2027 legislative issues

MTA-member township officials can review and provide input on the MTA legislative policy platform. The legislative policy objectives—reviewed, updated and approved annually—guide the Association's government relations efforts and reflect emerging issues and goals. MTA members are encouraged to review the current 2026-2027 Policy Platform and share any proposed additions and revisions by Monday, Nov. 23. Member-proposed policy changes will be reviewed by MTA policy committees and will be presented at the 2027 MTA Annual Meeting in conjunction with our 2027 Annual Educational Conference in April. Contact legislation@michigantownships.org with questions, comments or suggestions.

Read the October issue of *Township Focus*—online now!



Your October issue of *Township Focus* is here! In this month's cover story, ***Inside Election 2026***, hear from Michigan gubernatorial, attorney general and secretary of state candidates on important township-related issues and the priorities for their administration. Information is also shared on the MTA-opposed ballot initiative, Proposal 1, which asks voters if a constitutional convention should be convened in Michigan. Our feature article, *New award and scholarship looks to the 'Future of MTA'*, announces that applications are being accepted for the inaugural "Future of MTA" award, which was created to bolster new public officials, in memory of Harold Koviak's dedication to township government and for recruiting and mentoring future township leaders. **"Hello, MTA …?"** answers the question, "May the township clerk also serve as an election inspector?" while **"Financial Forum"** details the importance of involving township department heads in the budget process.



Reminders for clerks

- **Election inspectors**—The appointment of inspectors for the November election must be completed by your election commission no later than Oct. 13. Appointed inspectors must have completed proper certification within the last two years.
- **In-person absentee voter accessibility—**State and federal law protects the rights of voters of all abilities to freely participate in the electoral process. Clerks with access to voter assist terminals (VAT) can use the VAT as a reasonable modification to the in-person absentee process. The VAT must be set up in the clerk's office or polling place in a manner that does not include any barriers to access and ensures privacy.

Firewood quarantine taking effect Jan. 1

Beginning Jan. 1, 2027, it will no longer be permissible for anyone to bring untreated firewood into Michigan. The Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD) announced the new firewood quarantine as a part of efforts to slow the spread of invasive species. The quarantine will not apply to firewood that has been properly heat-treated and certified by MDARD, another state agriculture department or the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Learn more about heat treatment certifications, review the list of lumber products not impacted by the quarantine, and find other resources on the MDARD website.



Statewide cancer medication donation event approaching

Families affected by cancer know the financial hardship and exhaustion it can bring. Oct. 19-23 is the semiannual Michigan cancer drug donation week, helping put unused medications in the hands of patients in need at no cost. Michiganders can donate unexpired oral cancer medication and medication used to treat the side effects of cancer or chemotherapy. All donations must be unopened and sealed in the original manufacturer packaging and expire no less

than six months from the donation date. Find a donation event near you and learn more about the program on the YesRx website.

Updated *Assessing Your Township's Assessing* book available

An updated edition of MTA's *Assessing Your Township's Assessing* book is now available. First published in 2023, the new version includes statutory and administrative changes affecting township assessment administration that have occurred over the past few years, including changes to the designated assessor, disabled veterans tax exemption, record retention, and more. If you don't already have this book—the only resource of its kind geared specifically to township board oversight of property assessing—now is the perfect time to get your copy. Order yours today! Cost for MTA members is $43; $60 for non-members.

'It's Time' to honor someone from your township with a 'Spirit of MTA' award

MTA is accepting nominations for the "Spirit of MTA" award, which was created to recognize township leaders who defend and advance the best interests of their township and townships as a whole—as the Association has done on behalf of Michigan's 1,240 townships for nearly 75 years. We'll honor the award recipient at our Annual Educational Conference in April 2027. The Conference theme is "It's Time," and the award also recognizes that now is the time to honor those elected leaders who make a difference in their township every day. The nomination deadline is Jan. 4. NEW this year—two awards will be presented: one to an official serving in a township with a population of 4,000 or less, and one to an official from a township more than 4,000 population. A nomination form is included in the October issue of *Township Focus* magazine, or nominations can be submitted on michigantownships.org.

Federal updates for week of Sept. 29

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



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