

Scam email targeting local clerks, treasurers

MTA has learned from the state Bureau of Elections (BOE) that local clerks and treasurers are receiving scam emails asking them to send payment for election equipment or supplies. The emails are perhaps coming from clerkofficial.us@gmail.com, though other email addresses may also be used. **This is not a legitimate request for payment.** Please do not click on any links or attachments in the email or provide payment. The BOE sent an email last week alerting all clerks and election directors of the emails; following a request from the BOE, MTA shared the information via email with supervisors and treasurers earlier this week. Following MTA's email, we have learned of several townships who have received or fallen victim to the scam. Contact the BOE about any election-related emails that you have questions about. Please take caution when receiving emails from unknown addresses, follow your township's internal controls for payments, report suspicious activity, and contact MTA's Member Information Services staff for additional guidance if needed.

Committee acts on Revenue Sharing Trust Fund bills

Statutory revenue sharing payments for townships, cities and villages have been below the revised statutory formula since 2002, with many townships zeroed out due to previous budget cuts. These cuts have had a devastating impact on local revenue and the services municipalities provide, as revenue sharing and property taxes are the two main revenue sources for local units. Two bills supported by MTA were approved by the House Local Government and Municipal Finance Committee this week to create a "Revenue Sharing Trust Fund" to require the annual dedication of non-constitutionally dedicated sales tax revenue for statutory revenue sharing. Sponsored by Reps. Amos O'Neal (D-Saginaw) and Mark Tisdell (R-Rochester Hills), House Bills [4274](#) and [4275](#) would provide funding to all townships and villages currently not eligible to receive City, Village and Township Revenue Sharing (CVTRS) payments on a per-capita basis, protect statutory revenue sharing and help preserve resources that fund it. Under the legislation, the Revenue Sharing Trust Fund would receive 8% of 4% of the state sales tax revenue to be deposited in the fund. Of that amount, 52.87% would be dedicated to townships, cities and villages, and 46.13% would be dedicated to counties utilizing the current appropriation percentage applied. The bills next will be considered by the House. MTA encourages members to contact their state representative to urge their support of these bills.

Funding mechanism to reimburse locals for lost PPT revenue moves

Townships and other local units of government would receive reimbursement for lost personal property tax (PPT) revenue under three bills being discussed in the Legislature. [Senate Bill 331](#) and House Bills [4553](#) and [4554](#), strongly supported by MTA, would designate and provide reimbursement for revenue lost because of the increase in the small taxpayer exemption enacted in 2021 between \$80,000 and \$180,000. MTA worked with the Michigan Municipal League, Michigan Association of Counties, business groups, the state Department of Treasury and legislators in 2022 to create a reimbursement mechanism. SB 331, sponsored by Sen. Kevin Hertel (D-St. Clair Shores), establishes the process for claimant to file a statement of assessable personal property and a statement attesting to the combined tax value. HB 4553, sponsored by Rep. John Fitzgerald (D-Wyoming), creates the "Local Government Reimbursement Fund" and provides for the disposition of money from the fund. HB 4554, sponsored by Rep. Denise Mentzer (D-Mt. Clemens), would amend the Use Tax Act to specify that, beginning with the fiscal year ending Sept. 30, 2024, and each fiscal year thereafter, from the money received and collected under the act for the state share, \$75 million would have to be deposited annually into the Local Government Reimbursement Fund. HBs 4553 and 4554 now move to the House for consideration.

Bill seeks to include minimum staffing levels as subject of collective bargaining

Townships and other government entities would be required to include minimum staffing levels as a negotiable condition of collective bargaining under [House Bill 4688](#), sponsored by Rep. Jim Haadsma (D-Battle Creek). Current collective bargaining items include “pay, wages, hours of employment, or other conditions of employment ...” HB 4688, opposed by MTA, would make staffing levels a part of mandatory bargaining for all unions. As municipalities struggle to find qualified employees to fill public safety and other important positions, this bill could leave the determination of appropriate staffing levels to an arbitrator without regard to cuts that would have to be made in other public services to ensure minimum staffing levels are met. These decisions should solely be the responsibility of the officials elected to represent their communities. Testimony was taken this week before the House Labor Committee.

Bill to change charter township board vote abstentions

For members of a charter township board, the law currently provides that a board member who is present at a meeting generally must vote on all questions to be decided by the board, unless that member is unanimously excused by the other present members. [House Bill 4860](#), sponsored by Rep. Denise Mentzer (D-Mt. Clemens) and supported by MTA, would change that. Under the bill, reported by the House Local Government and Municipal Finance Committee this week, the law would be modified to allow a charter township board member to abstain from a vote if they believe a conflict of interest exists. The board member would be required to announce their intent to abstain and disclose on the record the factual basis for the abstention. The bill next will be considered by the full House.

Implementation date for military voters to electronically return ballots to be extended

A bill to move back the effective date for [Public Acts 196](#) and [197](#) of 2022—to allow uniformed service voters to electronically return voted ballots—was approved by the Senate Elections and Ethics Committee this week. Originally scheduled to take effect Jan. 1, 2024, [Senate Bill 470](#), sponsored by Sen. Paul Wojno (D-Warren), would move the date to Sept. 1, 2025. The request to delay implementation came from the Secretary of State to allow more time to promulgate the rules that will set up the process and procedures related to electronic ballot returns, including developing a secure portal. The bill now moves to the full Senate.

Address Confidentiality Program launches

The new state [Address Confidentiality Program](#) (ACP) provides certain protections for victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking, human trafficking, or those who fear that disclosure of their physical address will increase the risk of harm. The program, administered by the Michigan Department of Attorney General, went into effect Sept. 13. Because residential addresses are protected, certain information and records a township possesses—including tax bills and voter registration—are impacted. The program shields a participant’s actual physical address by providing an official designated/substitute address, free mail forwarding service, and a guidebook that outlines how to vote, how to change their address, what to do when contacting the police or emergency services, and more. A [website for state and local government agencies](#) also provides additional ACP information regarding disclosure requests, violations and Freedom of Information Act requests.

Property Tax Exemption Program application deadlines approaching

To ensure processing and certification for the following tax year, local units are reminded that the deadline for submitting applications for Industrial Facilities, Neighborhood Enterprise Zone, Obsolete Property Rehabilitation, Commercial Rehabilitation, New Personal Property, Charitable Nonprofit Housing, and Commercial Facilities Exemptions is **Oct. 31, 2023**. Completed exemption applications should be sent to pte@michigan.gov or P.O. Box 30760, Lansing, MI, 48909. Questions should be directed to pte@michigan.gov.

Assessors are also reminded that the deadline for submitting *2023 Annual Assessing Officer Reports* for local units that have Industrial Facility, Commercial Rehabilitation, Commercial Facilities and Obsolete Property Rehabilitation Exemptions is **Oct. 16, 2023**. *Industrial Facility Exemption Assessor Officer Reports* spreadsheets should be emailed to Treas-StateSharePropTaxes@michigan.gov, and *Assessing Officer Reports for Commercial Rehabilitation Exemptions, Commercial Facilities Exemptions, and Obsolete Property Rehabilitation Exemptions* should be emailed to pte@michigan.gov.

Bureau of Elections reminders

Presidential primary calendar. Earlier this year, [Public Act 2 of 2023](#) was signed into law moving the presidential primary from March 12, 2024, to Feb. 27, 2024. However, the act will not take effect until 90 days after the Legislature adjourns for the year. At this time, it is uncertain when the Legislature will adjourn and, accordingly, which date the change to the presidential primary will take effect. The state Bureau of Elections (BOE) [calendar](#) uses Feb. 27 as the presidential primary date. If the presidential primary is held later, some of the deadlines will fall on later dates. BOE advises the safest course of action is to assume the earlier deadlines will be in effect and adjust backward as necessary, rather than the opposite.

MOVE deadline for Nov. 7 election. Both state and federal law require that clerks transmit ballots to those military and overseas voters who have applied to receive them no later than 45 days before the election. The deadline to send out ballots for the Nov. 7 election is **Saturday, Sept. 23**. Unlike other deadlines in the election law, the Saturday MOVE deadline does not get bumped back to Monday. The QVF Help Desk will be available from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Sept. 23 to provide assistance. If something occurs in your township that prevents you from meeting the deadline, email MDOS-BOERegulatory@michigan.gov as soon as possible.

Responsibilities of township boards and local election commissions for early voting. [Public Act 81 of 2023](#) establishes the procedures that must be followed for early voting before statewide and federal elections. The Sept. 12 edition of the [BOE News Update](#) provided a list of various actions that local legislative bodies and election commissions must do. Some of the actions include that:

- townships boards **must** approve early voting sites and ensure that they are accessible and comply with applicable voting accessibility laws.
- townships boards **may** adopt resolutions to conduct early voting for local elections. They may also enter into municipal and county agreements to conduct early voting for local elections.
- townships boards **may** authorize the processing and tabulation of absent voter ballots before Election Day.

A detailed list can be found in the BOE Update.

DNR seeking input on state land review plan for 11 counties

Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) staff recommendations on whether to keep, exchange or sell state-managed land in 11 counties—Baraga, Benzie, Clare, Clinton, Genesee, Ionia, Manistee, Mecosta, Newaygo, Shiawassee and Wayne—are nearing DNR director approval, but there's still time to share feedback by **Oct. 11**. An [interactive map](#) can be used to view the parcels and to provide feedback. Comments can be left on the map or emailed to DNR-StateLandReview@michigan.gov. Contact heckmank1@michigan.gov with questions.

Leveraging Climate Pollution Reduction Grant funds webinar

The Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE) is hosting a webinar, [Leveraging federal Climate Pollution Reduction Grant \(CPRG\) funds](#), on **Oct. 10** from 11 a.m. to noon to explain how Michigan is using the \$3 million CPRG planning grant to provide a framework for pursuing upcoming competitive funding from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Topics include the grant purpose and timeline, EGLE's proposed approach to public and stakeholder engagement, and future funding opportunities. The [CPRG program](#) provides local governments, states and tribal nations resources to plan for and pursue greenhouse gas pollution reductions.

Member input sought for 2024 MTA legislative policy platform

MTA is seeking review and input from members on its legislative policy platform. Reviewed and updated annually, the legislative policy objectives guide MTA's government relations efforts and reflect emerging issues and goals. MTA members are encouraged to review the current [MTA 2023-24 Policy Platform](#) and share any proposed revisions and suggested additions by **Monday, Nov. 27**. Member-proposed policy changes will be reviewed by MTA committees for word selection and legality, and to ensure they conform with the Association's overall goals and objectives. The proposed policies will be presented at the 2024 MTA Annual Meeting in conjunction with our Annual Educational Conference in April. Contact the MTA Government Relations Department at legislation@michigantownships.org with questions, comments or suggestions.

Federal update for week of Sept. 11

Check out the National Association of Towns and Townships' *Weekly Legislative Update* [newsletter](#) for an update of federal actions impacting townships.