

## Update on renewable energy siting legislation

Legislation to **eliminate ALL local authority** over the location and permitting of utility-scale wind and solar facilities in communities has not yet been introduced. While MTA was told the bills would be introduced in the House in early September, the introduction date has now been moved back to the first or second week of October. The legislation would move the permitting of utility-scale renewable energy facilities from the local level to the Michigan Public Service Commission. MTA strongly opposes any efforts to silence the voices of local officials and residents over issues that have real, long-lasting impacts in their communities. In some areas of the state, these can be incredibly contentious, but the answer is not to create a one-size-fits-all approach. While MTA understands the need, and the desire, for renewable energy, the siting and permitting of renewable facilities should remain with the local community where that facility will be located for the next 20 to 50 years. Many townships across the state are already home to renewable energy facilities—by their choice. MTA needs your help to ensure that communities and Michiganders keep their voice on these important local decisions. MTA asks members to talk with their [state representative](#) and [senator](#) on the need to retain your township's role in the process. MTA will continue to keep members updated once the legislation is introduced.

## Bills would protect election officials from intimidation

Clerks, election workers and other election officials would be protected from intimidation as a result of their status as an election official under two bills that were reported by the House Elections Committee this week. [House Bills 4129](#) and [4130](#), sponsored by Rep. Kara Hope (D-Delhi Charter Twp.), would also make it a crime to prevent an election official from performing their election-related duties. The first two offenses would be escalating misdemeanors and a third offense would be a five-year felony. Under the bills, intimidation is a willful course of conduct involving harassment of an individual that is intended to cause and does cause that individual to fear physical injury. The committee also reported [Senate Bill 374](#), sponsored by Sen. Jeremy Moss (D-Southfield), that would allow precinct sizes of up to 4,999 active registered voters. This bill is similar to [HB 4702](#) enacted earlier this year, but it did not receive given immediate effect. MTA supports all three bills, which now move to the House floor.

## Townships could set minimum wage and other benefits under bill

Townships and other local governments would once again be able to set minimum wage and other benefits for employees in their jurisdictions under a bill that was reported from the Senate Labor Committee this week. [Senate Bill 171](#), sponsored by Sen. Sean McCann (D-Kalamazoo), repeals the Local Government Labor Regulatory Limitation Act of 2015, which prohibits local governments from passing ordinances regulating the employment relationship between a nonpublic employer and its employees. The bill now moves to the full Senate.

## Reminder: Townships asked to share your local broadband plans

Townships are asked by the [Michigan High-Speed Internet Office](#)(MIHI) to [share information](#) on any locally funded broadband expansion projects and any local broadband plans. This information is important as the state works to create a more digitally equitable state. Additionally, MIHI is also asking local officials to inform them about [your township's digital inclusion program ideas, highlights and stories](#).

## Help grow Michigan

You and your residents can help the Growing Michigan Together Council, established by Gov. Whitmer in June 2023, as they work to develop a long-term vision that addresses current and future challenges and sets Michigan up for success in the 21st Century. The council is seeking statewide feedback through a [Growing Michigan Together Survey](#) as it works to provide recommendations on specific policies to grow Michigan's population. The council will present its findings in December 2023 by submitting a report to the governor, the Michigan House of Representatives and Michigan Senate.

## .gov "action required" email not a scam

Moving your township's website and email accounts to a [.gov domain name](#) is a recommended step for a variety of reasons, including cybersecurity (*look to the October Township Focus for further discussion on cybersecurity, including .gov domains*). Townships with a .gov domain name may have recently received an email stating that action is required as [a new registrar](#) is implemented to request and manage [.gov domains](#). Township officials may wonder if the recently received email is a scam, or a legitimate request. **It is legitimate.** Specifically, to access the new registrar, in townships that currently have a .gov domain, officials or staff involved in the township's website/technology support will need to create a [Login.gov](#) account that is linked to the same email address being used in the current .gov registrar. Requests to switch to a new .gov domain will be paused during the transition to the new registrar, lasting roughly from October until January 2024. Townships can [request to be notified](#) when domain registrations open again.

## Grant opportunities for townships

- **Fisheries habitat.** The [Fisheries Habitat Grant](#), through the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) offers funding for a variety of activities tied to improving state fisheries and aquatic resources, including fish habitat conservation, dam removal and repair, resource assessment studies and public access to recreation opportunities. All applicants must first discuss their projects with their [local DNR fisheries biologist](#), then complete and submit a short preproposal for DNR review by **Oct. 20**. Contact [nohnerj@michigan.gov](mailto:nohnerj@michigan.gov) or (517) 599-6825), or [kosloskic3@michigan.gov](mailto:kosloskic3@michigan.gov) or (517) 281-1705 with questions about the grant or preproposal submission.
- **Neighborhood enhancement.** Applications are due **Oct. 30** for the [Neighborhood Enhancement Program](#) for activities directly tied to stabilization and enhancement of Michigan's rural communities and urban neighborhoods.

## Final 2023 Adopt-a-Highway pick-up

The final Michigan Department of Transportation [Adopt-A-Highway](#) clean-up begins **Sept. 23** and runs through **Oct. 1**. Civic groups, local businesses, individuals and local organizations can adopt a section of highway for at least two years. Adopt-A-Highway signs bearing group names are posted along the stretches of adopted highway. There is no fee to participate.

## **Nationwide Emergency Alert test happening Oct. 4**

The Federal Emergency Management Agency is conducting a nationwide test of the Emergency Broadcast System to ensure its effectiveness in delivering crucial alerts to the public. The test will alert cell phones, TVs and radios across the country on Wednesday, **Oct. 4** at 2:20 p.m. EST. The message will read along the lines of: *"THIS IS A TEST of the National Wireless Emergency Alert System. No action is needed."* In case of severe weather or other significant events, the test may be postponed to Oct. 11.

## **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](mailto:legislation@michigantownships.org) with questions, comments or suggestions.

## **Federal update for week of Sept. 18**

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