

Funding mechanism to reimburse locals for lost PPT revenue passes Senate

Townships and other local units of government would receive reimbursement for lost personal property tax (PPT) revenue under three bills before the Legislature. As previously shared, this legislation would provide reimbursement for revenue lost due to the increase in the small taxpayer exemption that took effect in 2023. [Senate Bill 331](#), sponsored by Sen. Kevin Hertel (D-St. Clair Shores), passed the Senate this week and next will be considered by the House. The bill establishes the process for a claimant to file a statement of assessable personal property and a statement attesting to the combined tax value. [House Bill 4553](#), sponsored by Rep. John Fitzgerald (D-Wyoming), creates the “Local Government Reimbursement Fund” to provide for the disposition of money from the fund, and [HB 4554](#), sponsored by Rep. Denise Mentzer (D-Mt. Clemens), would deposit \$75 million annually into the Local Government Reimbursement Fund. HBs 4554 and 4554 are before the House.

Changes to disabled veterans property tax exemption soon to head to governor

Taken together, three bills would make changes to the disabled veterans property tax exemption. [Senate Bill 176](#), sponsored by Sen. Sylvia Santana (D-Detroit), [SB 330](#), sponsored by Sen. Mary Cavanagh (D-Redford Chtr. Twp.), and [SB 364](#), sponsored by Sen. John Damoose (R-Harbor Springs), would require a property tax exemption on real property used and owned as a homestead by a disabled veteran or the veteran’s surviving spouse granted on or after Jan. 1, 2025, to remain in effect until it was rescinded by the individual granted the exemption or denied by the assessor. Additionally, the legislation would prescribe the methods to prorate the exemption for a qualified individual who did not use and own the property as a homestead for the entire tax year, proposes a local assessor audit program to audit the exemption and allowing an assessor to deny a new claim or rescind an existing claim, and would include, for tax year 2023 only, a denial of an exemption by the board of review as a "qualified error" that could be corrected upon appeal to a board of review. The bills passed the House this week and return to the Senate for concurrence and presentation to the governor.

Contact your state legislators TODAY on renewable energy local authority attack

As MTA has shared previously, legislation to **eliminate ALL local authority** on the location and permitting of utility-scale wind and solar facilities in communities is anticipated to be introduced soon. Originally slated for introduction in September, the legislation is now anticipated to be introduced in early 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 facilities can be incredibly contentious, but the answer is not to create a one-size-fits-all approach. MTA understands the need, and the desire, for renewable energy, but we also believe 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 your [state representative](#) and [senator](#) on the need to retain your township’s role in the process. In addition to personal outreach to your legislators, MTA will have available on its website on Oct. 2 a resolution your board may wish to adopt and forward to the Legislature. MTA will continue to keep members updated once the legislation is introduced.

House approves bill allowing assessment of property in alternate location on tax day

A permanent fix on how business property should be assessed if employees are working at remote, secondary locations may soon occur. [House Bill 4926](#), sponsored by Rep. Brenda Carter (D-Pontiac), would require personal property to be assessed in its original location or the location of the business, rather than an alternative location that it was moved to for remote work. Beginning with the pandemic in 2020, and for each subsequent tax year, legislation was passed for each tax year to allow for the assessment of personal property at remote work locations. Given the amount of remote work that continues, a permanent change is being sought. The bill will next be considered by the Senate.

Increase in insurance escrow cap measure moves to Senate

The amount of insurance withholding for fire-damaged homes would increase and abandoned funds could be used for repairs, under a bill reported passed by the House this week. [House Bill 4331](#), sponsored by Rep. Karen Whitsett (D-Detroit) and supported by MTA, would increase the maximum amount that can be escrowed by certain municipalities from fire insurance claims and certain other property insurance claims involving residential real property. The bill would increase the maximum amount to \$20,000 beginning Jan. 1, 2024, and the amount would then be annually adjusted every Jan. 1 based on the Detroit Consumer Price Index. The current cap of \$12,000, adjusted for inflation, took effect Jan. 1, 2015. The actual cap after adjustments is now \$15,009. The bill would also allow certain abandoned funds to be used for repairs, in addition to their currently allowed use for demolition. The bill now moves to the Senate for consideration.

Elections bills pass House

Several elections bills received approval by the House this week addressing challenged ballots, transportation to the polls, online absent voter (AV) applications, and electronic return of ballots. [House Bill 4567](#), sponsored by Rep. Penelope Tsernoglou (D-East Lansing), would eliminate the need to automatically process certain ballots as challenged ballots. With the passage of Proposal 3 of 2018 and same-day registration, voters have been allowed to register and vote in the last 14 days prior to the election as well as on Election Day. These voters are required to prove residency. If they are not able to do so with a driver's license or personal ID, they may sign an affidavit and use other acceptable documents to prove residency and allow them to vote. However, those ballots are automatically processed as challenged ballots. HB 4567 would remove the requirement that these ballots be automatically challenged.

[HB 4568](#), sponsored by Rep. Karen Whitsett (D-Detroit), would remove the current prohibition on hiring a motor vehicle transport to transport voters to a polling place, and [HB 4570](#), sponsored by Rep. Julie Rogers (D-Kalamazoo), would codify allowing voters to apply for AV ballots online. During the pandemic, administrative action was taken to allow voters to apply for AV ballots through an online system maintained by secretary of state (SOS).

Additionally, [HB 4210](#), sponsored by Rep. Carol Glanville (D-Walker), would allow the spouses and dependents of active military members serving outside the U.S. to submit their ballot electronically, similar to how the military members are allowed under current law. That law, PA 197 of 2022, was scheduled to go into effect on Jan. 1, 2024. However, the SOS has asked for additional time to develop the rules and procedures; [Senate Bill 470](#), sponsored by Sen. Paul Wojno (D-Warren) and passed by the Senate this week, would extend the date to Sept. 1, 2025.

Fee increase bills signed

Several fee bills connected to the implementation of the upcoming state budget on Oct. 1 are now law. A provision in [HB 5004](#) extends the Oct. 1, 2023, sunset on ambulance Quality Assurance Assessment Program collections to Oct. 1, 2027. [HB 5007](#) increases groundwater discharge permit fees paid by local units of government and entitles that wish to discharge wastewater to the ground or groundwater. The bills passed the House last week, passed the Senate this week and were signed into law on Sept. 29.

Bill moves to codify PA 116 policy for solar use

Since 2019, Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD) policy allows a solar facility to be a permitted use for the purpose of a farmland development rights agreement under the PA 116 farmland preservation program. [Senate Bill 277](#), sponsored by Sen. Kristen McDonald Rivet (D-Bay City), would codify the policy and specify that the solar facility would have to meet certain conditions and that a landowner could not claim the tax credit allowed under Part 361 while a solar facility was active. The bill, part of the clean energy legislation being considered by the Legislature, now moves to the House for action.

Measure provides more options for patrolling ORV trails

The patrol of off-road vehicle (ORV) trails would be treated like the patrol of snowmobile trails under legislation passed this week. [House Bill 4021](#), sponsored by Rep. Curt VanderWall (R-Ludington), would replace references to “law enforcement officers” with “peace officers” to allow officers who may not be certified by the Michigan Commission on Law Enforcement Standards to patrol ORV trails.

Join Treasury’s next Chart Chat on Oct. 5

Local officials and employees are invited to join the state Department of Treasury’s Chart Chat webinar on **Oct. 5 at 2 p.m.** Topics will include fiscally ready communities, updates on the ELITE system, statutory revenue sharing updates, resources for local governments and uniform reporting format. Register and submit questions prior to the webinar [here](#).

Upcoming EGLE webinars, input sought

Material Management Planning workgroup—The state Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE) is hosting a [virtual Materials Management Planning Workgroup meeting](#) on **Oct. 18, from 1:30 to 3 p.m.** While counties are primarily responsible for submitting these plans, they will work with townships and other municipalities to develop the plans for their county. EGLE staff will provide participants with information needed to complete the various steps of the process. Townships are also encouraged to check out available resources, such as the [Material Management Planning Quick Guide](#). Contact EGLE-MMP@michigan.gov with questions.

Solar permitting and SolSmart benefits—[Streamlining Solar Permitting and Benefits of SolSmart for Michigan’s Local Governments](#), a webinar held **Oct. 17, from 1 to 2 p.m.**, will discuss why municipalities should consider participation in SolSmart and SolarAPP+. SolSmart is a federal program that provides no-cost technical assistance to help local governments follow best practices to expand solar energy use in their jurisdictions.

Input sought on water quality monitoring locations—EGLE is seeking suggestions on where to focus water quality monitoring efforts. Suggestions for monitoring water or sediment chemistry, contaminants in fish, fish or macroinvertebrate communities, algae growth, E. coli bacteria, and other issues can be submitted via a [Monitoring Request Form](#) by **Oct. 31**.

MTA webinar offers latest on elections changes

As communities across the state are gearing up for the next election, MTA is poised to ensure township clerks are up to the challenge! Join us on Oct. 18 at noon as our very own Cindy Dodge and Judy Bigney review recent elections changes, including the most up-to-date information released by the state Bureau of Elections, and discuss how they impact your township. You'll walk away with tips to help ensure your township's elections run as smoothly as possible, all in just one hour. [Click here to register online now!](#)

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. 25

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