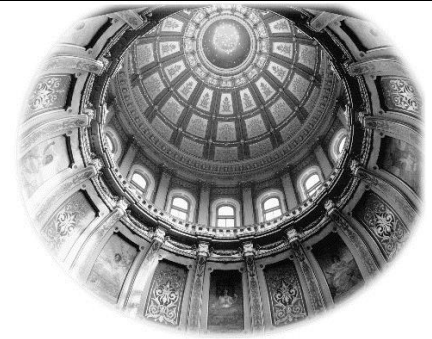


CAPITOL NEWS UPDATE

WEEK OF July 11, 2014

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SNYDER SIGNS OMNIBUS BUDGET

The biggest chunk of the state's total \$53.2 billion FY 2015 budget has been signed into law by Gov. Rick Snyder but with two line item vetoes – appropriations for pedestrian and railroad crossing programs.

Cut was \$1.5 million for a high-speed rail crossing pilot program and language requiring MDOT to do a feasibility study of construction a pedestrian-only crossing over the Bear River in Petoskey.

In his veto letter, Snyder also listed four other items that he considers unenforceable.

Snyder said the budget "strikes the right balance by making critical investments to fuel Michigan's comeback while maintaining fiscal responsibility."

Democrats disagreed, continuing to argue that the budget failed to address the heavier tax burden that was placed on Michigan residents during the 2011 tax reforms.

AUDIT CRITICAL OF ADULT PROTECTIVE SERVICES

A highly critical state audit alleges Michigan's Adult Protective Services (APS) unit has failed to investigate some abuse complaints and failed to alert law enforcement for some abuse complaints where there appeared to be criminal activity.

However, the Department of Human Services, where the APS unit is housed, rebutted some of the cases in response to the audit and also released a detailed timeline of improvements it will undergo. In addition, two APS supervisors were removed from their positions and relocated elsewhere within the DHS.

DHS Director Maura Corrigan said accountability and the chain of command appeared to be weak points that contributed to the auditor general's findings.

FLANAGAN TO ZERO IN ON CHARTER SCHOOL AUTHORIZERS

State Superintendent Mike Flanagan announced this week he will start suspending charter school authorizers who fail to close charter schools that don't measure up to their required standards.

His move followed a *Detroit Free Press* investigative series that uncovered transparency and oversight issues.

"We are getting serious about quality choices for Michigan students," Flanagan said. "It's my authority in state law and I will be using it."

Michigan Association of Public School Academies President Dan Quisenberry called Flanagan's announcement "ironic."

"He has had this authority for a number of years," Quisenberry said in a statement. "So it is ironic that this announcement comes follow a week of stories about how weak our state oversight is" and urged Flanagan to base his decisions on academic performance.

SUPREMES: NO HELP FOR SOME JUVENILE OFFENDERS

In a split 4-3 decision, the Michigan Supreme Court has ruled that some 360 Michigan prison inmates sentenced to life without parole for murders committed when they were 17 or under will not have their sentences lightened.

Although the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in a case in 2012 that a life-without-parole sentence for a juvenile is unconstitutionally cruel and unusual punishment, the state high court ruled the decision is not retroactive.

What does this mean? Juvenile murderers going forward can only be given a maximum sentence of life with possibility of parole, but past murderers cannot unless the federal courts rule differently in the future.

UNION OFFICIALS CALL FOR CANCELTION OF ARAMARK CONTRACT

Maggots found in and near food on the serving line at some of the state's prisons has prompted Mel Grieshaber, executive director of the Michigan Corrections Organization (NCO), which represents the corrections officers, said the state should fire the company. “

“We're having big problems and Aramark should be let go,” Grieshaber said.

Thus far, neither the state nor the company has confirmed any linkage between the maggot infestation and a round of prisoner health issues.

Aramark Correctional Services took over food operations at the state's prisons in early December and could lose its \$145 million contract because of ongoing food shortages, making unauthorized substitutions for approved menu items, and employees becoming overly friendly with prisoners. And that was all prior to the maggot outbreak.

Gov. Rick Snyder has not yet made a final decision on what to do about the problem, but Senate Majority Leader Randy Richardville (R-Monroe) said this week he believes the Aramark prison food contract should be re-visited due to the issues that have been raised.

LGBT GETS THE GREEN LIGHT FROM RICHARDVILLE

Senate Majority Leader Randy Richardville (R-Monroe) said he is ready to support expanding the state's civil rights law to include the LGBT community. His comment came during a wide-ranging exchange with the *Off the Record* panel.

This is just one of a laundry list of issues he wants to address before he is term-limited out of office six months from now.

Others include changing the state's term limit law, looking into the certificate of need process for hospitals and the ban on e-cigarettes that Gov. Rick Snyder may veto.

On term limits, Richardville is looking at a hybrid proposal based on the state's recall law. He says if citizens have a right to collect signatures to oust someone from office, the office holder should have a right to collect signatures to stay in office beyond the current term limits.

Richardville is promising a comprehensive rewrite of the current term limit law that would include docking legislative pay for missing sessions and for not getting the budget done on time.

A two-thirds vote of each legislative chamber is required to place the change before the voters.

M & M BRIEFS

Education evaluation bill becomes law. Gov. Rick Snyder has signed into law legislation (SB 0817) that delays a requirement that the state have a new educator evaluation system in place this year. The measure is part of a package of bills that lawmakers moved just prior to summer break. Legislation that would set a new framework for evaluating educators has passed the House but is currently pending in the Senate Education Committee.

Forestry deregulation bills are vetoed. Even though the Office of Regulatory Reinvention (ORR) recommended the change, Gov. Rick Snyder has put his veto pen to legislation (SBs 0481 and 0484 as well as HBs 4379 and 4380) that would have deregulated foresters in the state by repealing parts of the occupational code and state license fee act, delete references to registered foresters and give “qualified foresters” seats on county forestry committees and roles in forest management plans.

Pharmacy safety legislation gains Snyder’s signature. Legislation (SBs 0704 and 0904) that increases regulations of pharmacies and establishes penalties for not complying has been signed into law by Gov. Rick Snyder. The measures, now Public Acts 280 and 279 of 2014, focus on compounding pharmacies and for the 2012 fungal meningitis outbreak involving a Massachusetts-based compounding center that caused 22 deaths in Michigan.

National Guard members to receive tuition help. Legislation (HB 5451) that will create the Michigan National Guard Tuition Assistance Fund and provide tuition assistance for guard members at any college, university or vocational, technical or trade school in the state has been signed into law by Gov. Rick Snyder. It is now Public Act 259 of 2014.

Rustem is retiring. Public policy expert and Director of Strategy for Gov. Rick Snyder is retiring later this month due to a family health issue. Rustem helped in the governor’s transition and has been chief of the policy office this term.

Capitol Commission in search of new facilities director. The Michigan State Capitol Commission looking for a new facilities director to replace Steve Benkovsky who resigned. Currently, House Business Director Tim Bowlin is filling in. No information has been provided as to Benkovsky’s resignation.

CALENDAR OF IMPORTANT EVENTS

- 7/16 Tentative scheduled House and Senate sessions
- 7/16 Rep. Sam Singh (D-E. Lansing) Reception
Location: 5 p.m., Reno’s East, East Lansing
- 7/30 Tentative scheduled House session
- 8/5 Primary Election Day
- 8/13 Tentative scheduled House and Senate sessions
- 8/27 Tentative scheduled House session
- 9/9 Fall House and Senate sessions begin