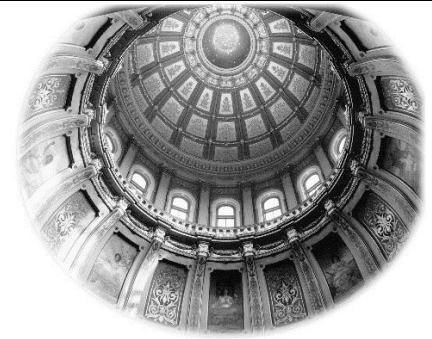


# CAPITOL NEWS UPDATE

WEEK OF September 5, 2014

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## **HOUSE PASSES WOLF HUNT PROTECTION MEASURE**

The House last week took the final step on a measure that will likely secure an Upper Peninsula wolf hunt for the foreseeable future despite efforts by anti-wolf hunting organizations that had gathered signatures sufficient to place two referendums before the voters.

The Senate approved the initiative earlier last month.

But the organization Keep Michigan Wolves Protected has pledged to challenge the new initiative, which includes an appropriation, in court.

On a 65-43 vote, the House gave the final sign off on a citizen initiative that would protect the Legislature and Natural Resources Commission's (NRC) abilities to designate wolves and other animals as game species.

The action renders moot the two referendums which challenged two previously passed wolf hunting protection laws. However, both referendums will remain on the November ballots.

## **SENATE EYEING FIRST STEP IN ROAD FUNDING SOLUTION**

Don't look for a major legislative package in the Senate to resolve the state's road funding problem.

It appears the GOP-controlled Senate leadership is looking at dealing with road warranties and truck weights as a first step toward a final transportation funding package.

Before the state moves ahead with a serious funding proposal for the state's crumbling roads and deteriorating bridges, Senate Majority Leader Randy Richardville (R-Monroe) said last week the first step is to assure the public that the state's new roads have warranties attached to them.

He did hint however that more could be on the way, such as fee increases for special permits issued for big and heavy trucks – something that was included in a House-passed measure (HB 5452).

The Senate workgroup, formed to come up with a road funding solution, is expected to meet again this month to talk about road funding distribution with a final step being getting together a separate group comprising House leadership and the Governor's office to discuss additional revenue.

Meanwhile, at their state convention, Michigan Democrats approved a resolution that supports "the exploration of revenue streams to support infrastructure funding" and "lowering the weight limits on trucks to lessen the impact on roads and bridges."

## **HOUSE DEMS WANT PER-PUPIL INCREASE**

Some House Democrats from Ingham County want the Legislature to increase the minimum per-pupil funding increase for schools in the FY '15 budget from \$50 per student to \$83 per student – the amount Gov. Rick Snyder initially proposed in his budget recommendations.

The Democrats argue that the \$50 more per-student is not enough to offset other cost increases that schools are encountering so the Legislature needs to provide more dollars.

To pay for the increase, the Dems would take \$20 million from an account set aside for future school employee retirement costs.

However, don't look for any legislative action. Ari Adler, spokesperson for House Speaker Jase Bolger (R-Marshall) said the budget was settled months ago, adding, "Announcing school-funding legislation in September could get these representatives an A+ for theatrics but they will probably be marked down for turning in their work three months late."

The 2015 budget was settled in June.

### **MERC LAW JUDGE TAKES ISSUE WITH MEA OPT-OUT WINDOW**

The Michigan Education Association's (MEA) limited timeframe for members to opt out of the union to the month of August has met resistance from an administrative law judge (ALJ).

ALJ Julia Stern has recommended to the Michigan Employment Relations Commission (MERC) that the timeframe no longer be limited to that one month period.

She also said that four MEA members who asked to resign their memberships in September and October be accepted and that the Saginaw Public School District post a notice that alerts members about the August window.

The decision does not go into effect until MERC issues a final ruling.

The MEA intends to file an appeal to the full MERC body before a final ruling happens.

### **POLITICS AND POLLS**

**Calley cruises.** Despite an aggressive challenge from Tea Party organizer Wes Nakagiri, Lt. Gov. Brian Calley cruised to victory by a nearly two-to-one victory at the GOP State Party convention and will continue to be Gov. Rick Snyder's running mate for the 2014 gubernatorial election in November. They will face Democratic gubernatorial nominee Mark Schauer and his running mate, former Rep. Lisa Brown of West Bloomfield.

**Land: Cut federal gas tax.** Republican U.S. Senate candidate Terri Lynn Land has proposed lowering the federal gas tax from 18.4 cents per gallon to around 4 cents and giving the states the option to make up the difference themselves – if they choose. Michigan would lose federal money out of the deal unless state lawmaker would raise the state's gas tax equal at least to the amount the federal government would cut.

### **M M & A BRIEFS**

**Haveman to step down.** A mild stroke suffered earlier this year has prompted Department of Community Health Director Jim Haveman to announce he will resign effective September 12. The 71 year old Haveman had planned on staying through 2015. Gov. Rick Snyder has named DCH Deputy Nick Lyon to replace Haveman to ensure what Snyder called a "seamless transition."

**NCLB waiver is extended.** Despite the uncertainty over the state's yet-to-be-determined assessments for spring 2011, the U.S. Department of Education (MDE) has extended Michigan a one-year waiver from the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act. Without the waiver, the state's schools would be subject to the standards contained in the NCLB law, which now requires schools to have 100 percent of students proficient in math and language arts.

**Dem lawmaker wants ban on fracking dumping.** Rep. Diane Slavens (D-Canton), a respiratory therapist, is pushing legislation that would ban the practice of other states dumping their fracking

byproduct in Michigan after it has been turned away by other states. Sen. Rick Jones (R-Grand Ledge) is considering sponsoring a similar bill.

**No constitutional amendments will appear on November ballot.** For the first time in 24 years voters will not be asked to vote on amendments to the state constitution when they go to the polls in November. However, they will be asked to make their wishes known on two ballot referendums as the Board of State Canvassers this week that deal with killing bills that essentially allow for wolf hunting in Michigan. But approval of the referendums will only pause the hunting of wolves for five months as the Legislature just approved a citizens' initiative that continues a mechanism by which a wolf hunt can be called by the Natural Resources Commission (NRC).

**Bolger unsure of gay rights vote.** House Speaker Jase Bolger (R-Marshall) says he remains to be convinced that the Legislature is route to take to expand the Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act to include sexual orientation and gender identity adding that he is not ready to set a House vote on the issue. Rep. Frank Foster (R-Petoskey), who is heading the drive for the change, said he expects his bill to be introduced in a couple of weeks.

**Whitmer to form women's nonprofit health group.** Term-limited Sen. Gretchen Whitmer (D-East Lansing) has announced the formation of a nonprofit Right to Health, partnering with the American Civil Liberties Union, Planned Parenthood of Michigan and others to coordinate conferences, fundraisers and forums on women's health as a means of influencing the women's rights conversation at the Capitol. Whitmer is expected to serve as a spokesperson and adviser for the nonpartisan group.

**Banks is elected Detroit Caucus Chair.** In a 5-4 vote, Rep. Brian Banks (D-Harper Woods) has been elected the next chair of the House's Detroit Caucus. In the next session, he will replace Rep. Thomas Stallworth (D-Detroit) who ran for the Senate in the August primary and lost.

#### **CALENDAR OF IMPORTANT EVENTS**

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| Sept. 9  | House/Senate lawmakers return for fall session   |
| Sept. 19 | Sen. Majority Leader Randy Richardville (R-Monroe) Golf Outing<br>Location: 8 a.m., Stonebridge Golf Club, Ann Arbor   |
| Sept. 23 | Rep. Ben Glardon (R-Owosso) Fall Breakfast F'Raiser<br>Location: 7:30 a.m., MI Beer & Wine Wholesalers, Lansing        |
| Sept. 24 | Sec. of State Ruth Johnson Lunch Reception<br>Location: 11:30 a.m., MI Health & Hospital Assn., Capitol Tower, Lansing |