

CAPITOL NEWS UPDATE

WEEK OF JANUARY 9, 2016

Integrity. Individual Attention. Precision Strategy. Proven Results



NEW LEGISLATIVE SESSION BEGINS

The swearing-in ceremony for the official opening of the 99th session of the Michigan House of Representatives took place Wednesday, Jan. 11.

New Supreme Court Chief Justice Stephen Markman and Justice Bridget McCormack conducted the ceremony.

Leaders and members on both sides of the aisles expressed their wishes for a more cooperative atmosphere than in the 2015-16 session and called for an attitude of bipartisanship in the next two years. In addition, both caucuses mentioned the need to gather around promoting skilled trades education in the state.

House Speaker Tom Leonard (R-DeWitt), said he would also like to prioritize mental health, teacher retirement reform, and reducing health insurance rates.

House Minority Leader Sam Singh (D-East Lansing) seconded Leonard's nomination, and his message of hope that the "next path will be one of bipartisanship." Singh focused on issues tied to the economy for his caucus' message, including creating jobs, investing in infrastructure and improving access to education and training.

SENATE DEDICATES NEW BUILDING

The New Senate Building was dedicated on Monday, Jan. 9 and will be named after former Lt. Gov. Connie Binsfeld. The Senate also began operating out of the building at 201 Townsend on Monday, which is a block west of their former offices in the Farnum Building, across the street from the Capitol and east of the U.S. Post Office.

The Senate Business Office dedicated the building in Binsfeld's honor in recognition of her eight years as a member and eight years presiding over the Senate as Lieutenant Governor. Binsfeld was the first woman to serve in leadership positions in the House, Senate, and executive branch. Binsfeld was chosen as Lieutenant Governor to gubernatorial candidate John Engler in 1990 and served as lieutenant governor from 1991-1999.

ELSENHEIMER APPOINTED TO 13TH CIRCUIT COURT

Gov. Rick Snyder has appointed Kevin Elsenheimer to the 13th Circuit Court, which covers Antrim, Grand Traverse, and Leelanau counties.

Elsenheimer currently serves as the executive director of the Michigan State Housing Development Authority. Prior to that position, he served as a Senior Chief Deputy Director at the Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs where he spearheaded reforms in the state's workers compensation programs, handled hearings and adjudicated disputes as an administrative law judge. He also served as the Director of the Workers Compensation Agency.

He was elected to the House in November of 2003 and served as the Minority Leader from 2009 to 2010. Elsenheimer is a member of the State Bar of Michigan, the Federal Bar of Western Michigan, and the Supreme Court of the United States Bar Association. He earned his bachelor's degree in 1987 from Michigan State University and a law degree in 1994 from Wayne State University.

Elsenheimer fills the vacancy created by the resignation of Judge Philip Rodgers. He will be required to seek election in November 2018 for the remainder of the term ending in 2020.

GOVERNOR SIGNS MUNICIPAL RETIREE BENEFIT REFORM BILL

Gov. Rick Snyder signed into law this week, a bill that requires local municipalities to file annual reports on the on the fiscal status of their retiree health care with the Department of Treasury, which will be summarized on their website. HB 6075, sponsored by Rep. Dan LAUWERS (R-Brockway), also requires a local unit system that is not at least 60 percent funded to post on their website the steps it is taking to decrease its unfunded liability.

As the only surviving bill of the House's proposal to reform municipal retiree benefits, the bill was seen a first step toward other post-employment benefits (OPEB) reform.

SNYDER SIGNS BILL EXPANDING MEDICAL SERVICES OF ARPNS

Gov. Rick Snyder recently signed a bill into law that allows specialized nurses to provide a broader range of medical services. Under the new law, advanced practice registered nurses (APRNs) will be able to prescribe drugs and controlled substances and dispense complimentary starter doses of controlled substances under delegation of a physician. APRNs will also be allowed to make house calls or go on rounds whose timing and frequency is unrestricted by a physician. HB 5400 was sponsored by former Rep. Ken Yonker.

MM&A BRIEFS

Former Rep. Somerville returns

Former Rep. Pat Somerville will remain in Lansing to serve as House Speaker Tom Leonard's (R-DeWitt) deputy director of caucus services. Somerville served from 2011 to 2016 in the House, representing the 23rd District.

Former Rep. Santana joins Office of Urban Initiatives

Gov. Rick Snyder has hired former Rep. Harvey Santana (D-Detroit) to serve as Tri-County Deputy with the Michigan Office of Urban Initiatives. Santana worked actively with the Republican caucus on Detroit-related issues while in the House, including the Detroit Public School rescue package.

Santana will work to develop policy for Wayne, Macomb and Oakland counties in his new post, including issues with the City of Detroit.

State of emergency declared in Macomb over Fraser sinkhole

A state of emergency has been declared by Gov. Rick Snyder in Macomb County over the Fraser sinkhole. Snyder said that there is an immediate threat to 11 communities and the Selfridge Air National Guard Base, due to the size of scope of the repair process, the population it serves, the instability of the ground for the sinkhole, and a currently obstructed sewer flow capacity.

Declaring a state of emergency makes state resources available to assist in efforts.

Macomb County and Fraser officials have been evacuating impacted residents, cleaning up the area, and beginning to stabilize and replace the impacted sewer lines.

Calendar of Important Events

- Jan. 11 Legislative Session Begins
- Jan. 17 State of the State address
 Location: 7 p.m., Capitol Building, Lansing
- Jan. 18 Economic Forecast Forum (Sponsored by Michigan Chamber of Commerce Foundation/MI Bankers)
 Location: 9:30 a.m., Sheraton Hotel, Ann Arbor
- Jan. 26 Sen. John Proos Breakfast Reception
 Location: 7:30 a.m., Governors Room, Lansing