

CAPITOL NEWS UPDATE

WEEK OF JANUARY 23, 2017

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SCHOOL REFORM OFFICE RELEASES LIST OF POOR-PERFORMING PUBLIC SCHOOLS SET TO CLOSE

On Jan. 20, the state School Reform Office released a list of 38 schools facing closure by the end of the school year due to poor academic performance. The list includes 24 schools in the Detroit Public Schools Community District and the state-created Education Achievement Authority in the city of Detroit.

The SRO had discussed the potential closures months ago, warning schools that they could be shut down if they showed no academic improvement and continued poor performance from 2014 to 2016. The action could impact more than 18,000 students.

The SRO is in the process of sending out closure notices, and has already sent letters to parents of children who attend classes in the 38 schools. It is also in the process of examining which other public schools the children would attend if their school closes. If a school closing creates an unreasonable hardship on the students, or all the other surrounding public schools also on the list, the SRO will pursue other options.

Senate Education Committee Chair Phil Pavlov (R-St. Clair) is looking into repealing the state's "failing schools" law and creating one system to explain how schools are placed on the list.

The SRO also announced 79 schools were being released from the state's Priority School list.

HOUSE ANNOUNCES COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS FOR 2017-18

House Republicans announced their 2017-2018 committee assignments, including 11 freshman with chairmanship.

The four freshmen with chairmanships on the Appropriations side are:

Rep. Sue Allor (R-Wolverine) Natural Resources; Rep. Tommy Brann (R-Wyoming) Licensing and Regulatory Affairs/Insurance & Financial Services; Rep. Shane Hernandez (R-Port Huron) Transportation; and Rep. Kim LaSata (R-St. Joseph), Higher Education.

Other freshmen chairs include: Tom Albert (R-Belding) Financial Liability Reform; Rep. Ben Frederick (R-Owosso), Workforce and Talent Development; Rep. Michele Hoitenga (R-Manton)

Communications and Technology; Steve Johnson (R-Wayland) Joint Committee on Administrative Rules; Rep. Jim Lower (R-Cedar Lake) Local Government; Rep. Diane Rendon (R-Lake City) Families, Children and Seniors; and Rep. Jason Wentworth (R-Clare), Military and Veterans Affairs.

Other assignments to note include Rep. Lee Chatfield (R-Levering) chairing the new Michigan Competitiveness Committee, and Rep. Tim Kelly (R-Saginaw) will chair both the House Education Reform Committee and the K-12 Appropriations Subcommittee.

Additional assignments: Rep. Triston Cole (R-Mancelona), Transportation and Infrastructure; Rep. Gary Glenn (R-Midland), Energy Policy Committee; Rep. Brandt Iden (R-Oshtemo), Regulatory Reform; Rep. Jim Runestad (R-White Lake), Judiciary; Rep. Jim Tedder (R-Clarkston), Tax Policy; Rep. Lana Theis (R-Brighton), Insurance Committee; and Rep. Henry Vaupel (R-Handy Township) will be chair of the Health Policy Committee.

INCOME TAX UP FOR DISCUSSION IN HOUSE AND SENATE

Republicans in the House and Senate are seeking to reduce and eventually eliminate the state's personal income tax.

House Bill 4001, introduced by Rep. Lee Chatfield (R-Levering), would roll back the state's income tax to 3.9 percent in 2018, and decrease it by 0.1 percent each year beginning in 2019 until it reaches zero, which could take up to 40 years.

Sen. Jack Brandenburg (R-Harrison Township) is also discussing a related idea to eliminate the income tax over a five-year period. Michigan's current income tax rate is currently 4.25 percent, and has been at that rate since 2012.

Eliminating the income tax would significantly affect the state's overall revenue, since it is the state's single-largest source of revenue. Gov. Rick Snyder has said he is not opposed to the elimination of the income tax, but said that the 2015 road package already created tax relief, and that he is looking for answers to the questions about how the revenue will be replaced or which programs will be cut.

SENATE TRIES AGAIN TO REPEAL PREVAILING WAGE LAW

Senate Republicans took another shot at repealing Michigan's prevailing wage law last week with a three-bill package to repeal the over 50-year old law. Senate Majority Leader Arlan Meekhof (R-West Olive) introduced SB 0001, the first bill in the package and of this legislative session. Sen. Peter MacGregor (R-Rockford) and Sen. David Robertson (R-Grand Blanc) have SB 0002 and 0003 respectively.

The current law requires that workers employed on state-financed or sponsored construction projects receive the union rate of pay established within the defined area where the project is located.

Similar legislation in 2015 passed the Senate, but stalled in the House.

KEEPING UP WITH TRUMP

As Trump works his plan for his first 100 days in office, the executive orders have been multiplying. Here's a list of President Trump's executive actions since entering office so far:

1. Affordable Care Act rollback.
2. Regulations now in process (but not approved) are frozen until they are approved by him or an agency after he took office.
3. Federal dollars cannot go to organizations that provide abortion services.
4. Withdrawing the United States from all Trans-Pacific Partnership negotiations and from signing the trade deal.
5. Federal hiring freeze. Agencies cannot fill any vacant positions or open new ones with the exception of military personnel and critical public safety positions.
- 6, 7. Expediting approval of permits for the Dakota Access and Keystone Oil Pipelines.
8. Creating faster deadlines and environmental approval for "high priority" infrastructure projects.
9. Planning to ensure that all pipelines built or repaired in the United States be constructed with American-made materials "to the maximum extent possible."
10. Reviewing regulations for American manufacturers to find ways to expedite permits and federal process.
11. Directing agencies to increase deportation of those in the country illegally, and hire 10,000 more Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents, subject to funding.
12. Begin the necessary steps for the construction of a wall on the southern border, directing agencies to construct or contract out for more detention facilities here, and hire an additional 5,000 border patrol agents, subject to funding.

MM&A BRIEFS

Weiser set to become Michigan Republican Party chair

With his only opponent dropping out of the race, Ron Weiser is set to succeed Ronna Romney McDaniel as the chairman of Michigan's Republican party. His opponent, Scott Hagerstrom, announced he dropped his bid for the sake of party unity. Weiser is a University of Michigan Regent and was state party chair from 2009-2011.

McDaniel was recently named the new head of the Republican National Committee.

State celebrates 180th birthday

Gov. Rick Snyder, Lt. Gov. Brian Calley, Secretary of State Ruth Johnson, Attorney General Bill Schuette, House Speaker Tom Leonard (R-DeWitt), Senate Majority Leader Arlan Meekhof, Justice Robert Young and House Minority Leader Sam Singh (D-East Lansing), spoke at a birthday celebration for the state at the Capitol rotunda on Jan. 26.

Calendar of Important Events

- Feb. 3-5 Mid-Michigan Womens Expo
Location: 10 a.m., Lansing Center, Lansing
- Feb. 8 MAHP Medicaid 101+: Breakfast and Answers Provided (Sponsored by Michigan Association of Health Plans)
Location: 8 a.m., State Capitol Building - Speakers Library (2nd Floor), Lansing