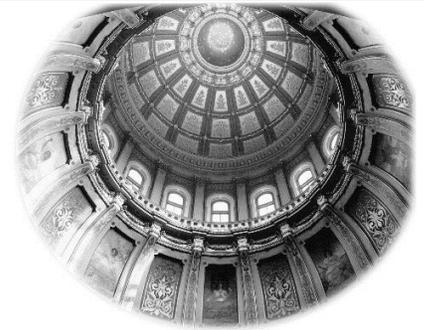


CAPITOL NEWS UPDATE

WEEK OF October 17, 2016

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JOINT SPECIAL COMMITTEE RELEASES REPORT ON FLINT

The state Legislature's Joint Committee on the Flint Public Health Emergency released its report on Wednesday, Oct. 19, making 36 recommendations including replacing Emergency Managers with a three-member oversight council, and proposing to increase the criminal penalty for misconduct by public officials.

The special committee, led by Sen. Jim Stamas (R-Midland), was created to take testimony on and examine governmental failures in relation to the Flint water crisis.

Other recommendations include: considering Legislation to help spur economic development in Flint, establishing a state employee ombudsman within the Legislature to incentivize reporting of governmental misconduct and strengthen the Legislature's oversight role over the executive branch, the creation of a Commission of Environmental Quality as the new head of the Department of Environmental Quality, and requiring state and local health departments to promptly share medical and epidemiological information regarding a condition of public health with interested experts and medical professionals.

"The Flint water crisis spurred nationwide inquiries and calls for positive change. Unlike environmental crises that result from a natural disaster, what happened in Flint in 2014-2015 is the result of human errors and poor decisions made over the course of months by officials and employees at the local, state, and federal levels. This series of bad decisions compounded a growing problem that ultimately proved disastrous," the 34-page report says.

CLINTON HAS DOUBLE DIGIT LEAD IN MICHIGAN

Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump continues to lose numbers in Michigan's polls, with Mitchell Research & Communications showing him down 13 points to Democratic nominee Hillary Clinton in a poll released before the last debate.

Clinton, for the first time, is above 50 percent, leading her opponent 51 percent to 38 percent statewide. Libertarian Gary Johnson is at 6 percent, and Green Jill Stein is at 2 percent, with three percent undecided.

Prior to this, Clinton was up 10 percent, and 5 percent in late September.

The race is closer outstate than in the Southeast Michigan region, with Clinton at 48 to 45 percent. She is at 82 to 12 percent in Detroit, and 53 to 41 percent in the tri-county area.

Clinton is also beating Trump with non-union voters 47 to 41 percent, and has a 24-point lead with union members.

In addition, she has a 25 percent advantage with those between 18-44, a two-point edge with those between 45-64 and a 14-point lead with seniors. Trump's numbers improved with middle-aged voters, but dropped with millennials. He continues to hold a 10-point lead with independent voters.

STATE MAY RAISE PENALTIES FOR HACKING SELF-DRIVING CARS

The Michigan Senate unanimously passed a pair of bills Thursday that would increase the penalties for interfering with the computer systems of autonomous vehicles.

Currently, anyone who tampers with the computer system of a driverless car resulting in injury faces a 10-year sentence and \$50,000 fine.

The new bill would increase the penalty to life in prison if the tampering resulted in death. If the interference could be or was reversed without any injury to the car's owner, the person tampering with the vehicle could be subject to a misdemeanor charge carrying a 93-day jail sentence and a maximum fine of \$500.

The law wouldn't apply to auto manufacturers or licensed mechanics who are servicing the car.

SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE PASSES BILL ON NONPUBLIC STUDENT BUSSING

The Senate Education Committee voted 3-1 to report out a bill (SB 1046) to eliminate wording in the State School Code that says school districts can deny transportation to non-district pupils.

Three Republican committee members supported the bill, and Sen. David Knezek (D-Dearborn Heights) voted against it.

Currently, the law reads that a school district that provides transportation for its resident pupils, other than students with a disability, or other pupils who cannot safely walk to school, must transport nonpublic school students if the child is eligible to receive state school aid for transportation.

The pupil must also be attending the nearest state-approved nonpublic school in the district to which he or she is eligible to be admitted.

The Senate bill would eliminate the requirement that the pupil be a person for whom the district is eligible to receive state school aid for transportation.

According to the bill's sponsor, Sen. Patrick Colbeck (R-Canton), the bill is a technical fix, and the wording currently in the school code is basically an oversight that hasn't carried the weight of law since the passage of Proposal A in 1994.

BREWER SEEKS GRAND JURY INVESTIGATION OVER SNYDER LEGAL FEES

Former Michigan Democratic Party Chair Mark Brewer is asking the Ingham County Circuit Court for a one-person grand jury to investigate whether Gov. Rick Snyder's use of taxpayer money to pay his criminal defense legal fees related to the Flint water crisis.

Brewer filed the complaint on behalf of Flint resident Keri Webber, who said members of her family have suffered health complications from lead exposure and Legionnaires' disease.

The complaint asks a grand jury to investigate whether Snyder's use of taxpayer dollars for the hiring of lawyers amounts to an unauthorized and illicit use of funds, and that the retention of those lawyers amounted to misconduct in office.

Snyder's spokesperson said the attorney costs are due to the processing of hundreds of thousands of documents, and the fact that the Attorney General's Office would normally represent state officials, but does not have the capacity to take on the vast amount of work created by this issue.

MM&A BRIEFS

Senate passes bills on how health insurers taxed

A package of four bills that change how health insurers are taxed were approved in the Senate on Thursday with support from Democrats and Republicans. The bills overhaul how certain Medicaid costs are funded, end a tax on health insurance claims that business groups have opposed, and continue a tax on Medicaid managed health care organizations.

Schauer to serve as adviser for new national redistricting group

Former gubernatorial candidate and Michigan Congressman Mark Schauer is serving as a senior adviser for a new Democratic national group – the National Democratic Redistricting Committee.

Former U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder will be chair of the group, and it will reportedly be a priority for President Barack Obama when he leaves office Jan. 20.

The group will work to strengthen the party's influence when, following the 2020 census, legislative and congressional maps are redrawn following the 2020 census. The group will raise money, coordinate strategy and organize ballot proposals and push legal challenges to redistricting as needed.

Education Commission holds opening night in Grand Rapids

Gov. Rick Snyder's 21st Century Education Commission will make its first stop on a statewide "listening tour" on Nov. 3 at the Gerald R. Ford Academic Center from 3:45 to 5 p.m.

Snyder created the commission to craft recommendations for improvements to the state's education system. More information and additional stops will be announced soon.

Calendar of Important Events

- Oct. 22 Making Strides Against Breast Cancer (Sponsored by American Cancer Society)
Location: 11 a.m., Capitol Building, Lansing
- Oct. 23 61st House District Candidate John Fisher Afternoon Reception
Location: 3:30 p.m., Latitude Brewing Company, Portage
- Oct. 25 ** RESCHEDULED **
66th House District Candidate Annie Brown Okvoterfest Reception
Location: 5:30 p.m., Paw Paw Brewing Company, Paw Paw
- Oct. 25 Rep. Tom Cochran (D-Mason) - Autumn Reception
Location: 5:30 p.m., Bad Brewing Company, Mason
- Oct. 27 50th House District Representative Tim Sneller Evening Reception
Location: 5 p.m., Walli s Family Restaurant, Burton

- Oct. 27 66th House District Candidate Annie Brown - Okvoterfest Reception
Location: 5:30 p.m., Paw Paw Brewing Company, Paw Paw
- Nov. 3 Sen. Wayne Schmidt (R-Traverse City) Evening Reception
Location: 5:30 p.m., Weathervane Restaurant, Charlevoix
- Nov. 8 General Election