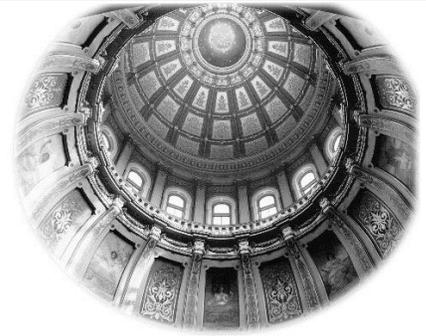


# CAPITOL NEWS UPDATE

WEEK OF July 11, 2016

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## **SNYDER NAMES NEW DEQ DIRECTOR**

Gov. Rick Snyder has tapped C. Heidi Grether, his administration's deputy director at the Michigan Agency for Energy (MAE), as director of the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ).

Grether will become the permanent replacement to Dan Wyant, who resigned over the department's handling of the Flint water crisis. Interim DEQ Director Keith Creagh will return to his post as director of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR).

Prior to joining MAE, Grether worked for BP America. She has served as staff in both chambers of the Legislature, including legislative director for former Speaker Paul Hillemonds.

Environmental groups and Democrat were quick to pour gasoline on the appointment. The Michigan Democratic Party called Grether a "BP Oil Spill Spin Doctor." Progress Michigan selecting Grether to run the DEQ was like picking "a fox to guard the hen house."

Yet, according to the Governor's news release, Grether is an active member of many environmental advocacy organizations, including the Michigan Nature Association, the Nature Conservancy and the American Bird Conservancy.

Her appointment will be effective Aug. 1, and is subject to the advice and consent of the Senate.

## **SNYDER TO APPEAL 3% MPSERS RULING, NO HELP FROM THE AG**

A Court of Appeals' ruling that would have the state return three percent that teachers have been required to pay into the state's pension system is going to be appealed to the Michigan Supreme Court by Gov. Rick Snyder. However, Attorney General Bill Schuette has said his office will decline to provide counsel to the Governor. The AG will provide an appointment for a special assistant attorney general but it won't be his staff representing the state of Michigan in court.

Snyder said it is the AG's prerogative not to participate in the Governor's appeal but that it is important to take the case to the Michigan Supreme Court because "we want to make sure we have a strong teacher retirement system...and make sure that's available" when teachers and other education employees leave their jobs.

If the COA ruling would stand, teachers who were required to pay 3 percent of their income into MPSERS for health benefits from 2010 to 2013 may receive that money back with interest.

## **PRIMARY DATE SET TO FILL THE PLawecki SEAT**

August 30 is the date that Gov. Rick Snyder has set for the special primary election date for the 11<sup>th</sup> House District seat vacated by the recent death of Rep. Julie Plawecki (D-Dearborn Heights) who suffered a heart attack while hiking in Oregon with her two daughters.

One of the daughters, Lauren Plawecki, was the only Democrat to file to run for the remaining six weeks of her mother's term by the filing deadline on Tuesday. However, since Plawecki is the only candidate, the Aug. 30 primary is likely to be cancelled. Nov. 8 will serve as the general election date.

Both the primary and general election will be to fill the seat through the end of 2016.

Meanwhile, a group of suburban Wayne County Democrats picked Inkster City Councilmember Jewel Jones to replace Plawecki on the August 2 primary ballot for the legislative term beginning in January 2017. Plawecki was unopposed in the August 2 primary.

### **INJUNCTION GRANTED ON SB571 ELECTION LAW**

U.S. Eastern District Court Judge Linda Parker has granted a preliminary injunction on a portion of the election law known as SB 571 (now Public Act 269) having to do with the section banning businesses from collecting union political action committee (PAC) money from their employees if the business has its own PAC for which it collects money through an automatic deduction.

Several unions brought the suit alleging the act violates the First Amendment and contract clause of the U.S. Constitution.

Judge Parker said the law cannot survive "public scrutiny" and added there is a "strong likelihood" that the unions would prevail on their claims.

### **SNYDER TO FEDS: FUND NEW SOO LOCKS**

A letter has been sent by Gov. Rick Snyder to members of the Michigan Congressional delegation formally requesting the federal government pick up the entire tab to fully reconstruct portions of the Soo Locks.

Snyder said if something were to happen with the Poe Lock, it would cause "significant disruptions" to the shipping of steel, causing production of almost all North American appliances, automobiles, railcars and construction, farm and mining equipment to cease.

### **DEMS WANT EARLY VOTING AMENDMENT**

A constitutional amendment (HJR PP) has been introduced by Reps. Jon Hoadley (D-Kalamazoo) and Gretchen Driskell (D-Saline) that would expand access to voting through four avenues of reform.

Called the "Voter's Bill of Rights," the amendment would provide for no-reason absentee voting, early voting up to 15 days before Election Day, automatic voter registration and automatic processing of absentee ballots for any military service members overseas.

Should HJR PP make it to the floor, it would require a two-thirds vote by both the House and Senate in order to appear on the ballot for voters.

### **STATE PICKS THE CONTRACTORS, ENBRIDGE PAYS THE BILL**

The state has selected two contractors to perform a pair of analyses on the Enbridge pipelines running beneath the Straits of Mackinac. The analyses will be funded by the company but won't be complete until summer of 2017.

Dynamic Risk Assessments, Inc. will do the alternatives analysis. Det Norske Veritas will do the independent risk analysis.

According to a news release from Attorney General Bill Schuette's office, the state will oversee the studies and Enbridge will pay \$3.5 million into an escrow account to pay for them.

Schuette is a member of the Pipeline Safety Advisory Board.

## **POLITICS AND POLLS**

**Dems find candidate to challenge Bishop.** Suzanna Shkreli, an assistant Macomb county prosecutor who lives in Clarkston has emerged as a Democratic candidate in the 8<sup>th</sup> Congressional District to challenge freshman U.S. Rep. Mike Bishop (R-Rochester).

The 29-year old Shkreli, who is a first-generation American and daughter of Albanian immigrants, has announced she will run in the seat for which actress Melissa Gilbert has opted to no longer campaign. Shkreli is already on leave from her job in the prosecutor's office.

## **M M & A BRIEFS**

**Snyder asks Supreme Court about state funding for private schools.** Gov. Rick Snyder is seeking an advisory opinion from the Michigan Supreme Court about the constitutionality of the private school funding provision contained in the state's K-12 budget for next year. The \$2.5 million in question was included to reimburse private schools for state-mandated expenses. Snyder asked the opinion be issued before Oct. 1, when the law would become effective.

**COA rules on DEQ permits.** Advocates have 60 days to appeal the issuance of a permit from the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), according to a ruling handed down by the Court of Appeals (COA) – a ruling that agrees with the Wayne County Circuit Court in the case South Dearborn Environmental Improvement Assn v DEQ (No. 326485).

**State: Keep pro-marijuana legalization question off ballot.** The state of Michigan has asked the Court of Claims to reject the lawsuit that seeks to place the marijuana legalization issue on the Nov. 8 ballot. In a 20-page filing, the Attorney General's office rejected all of the plaintiffs' claims that the state-imposed limitations on ballot proposals are unconstitutional.

**Auto insurance tax fix becomes law.** Gov. Rick Snyder has signed into law legislation (HBs 5457 and 5458) that takes off the books the \$80 million annual tax credit insurance companies have enjoyed since 2012 due to an alleged mistake written in legislation. The insurance industry is claiming the repeal of the tax credit could add up to a \$40-a-year increase to consumers' auto insurance premiums.

**MDHHS names new chief deputy director.** Beginning Monday (July 18) Nancy Vreibel will be the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) chief deputy director, Vreibel has 40 years of state government experience, the latest director of appropriations for the chairpersons of the Michigan Senate Appropriations Committee since 2007.

## **CALENDAR OF IMPORTANT EVENTS**

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| July 19   | Rep. Vanessa Guerra (D-Bridgeport) Evening Reception<br>Location: 5 p.m., Woody's Draught House, Saginaw                |
| July 20   | Rep. Tom Cochran (D-Mason) Evening Reception<br>6 p.m., Cochran residence, Mason  |
| July 22   | Rep. Sheldon Neeley (D-Flint) Evening Reception<br>Location: 6 p.m., Signature Chop House Grand Ballroom, Flushing      |
| July 28   | Sen. Dave Hildenbrand (R-Lowell) 12 <sup>th</sup> Annual Golf Outing<br>Location: 8:30 a.m., Deer Run Golf Club, Lowell |
| August 3  | Tentative House and Senate sessions   |
| August 12 | Sen. Tonya Schuitmaker (R-Lawton) Annual Golf Outing<br>Location: 9 a.m., Heritage Glen Golf Club, Paw Paw              |