



MWA Legislative Update – May 2016

The Michigan Legislature is currently finalizing work on next year's state budget, and should complete that work by June 1. The other remaining priority for Legislators to resolve before they recess for the summer in mid-June is how (or whether) to enact reforms and provide financial assistance to Detroit Public Schools (DPS) in order to avoid a potential DPS bankruptcy before the beginning of the next school year this fall. While the state budget and DPS reforms currently garner the lions' share of attention in Lansing, a few items of interest to MWA have recently appeared on our radar screen.

Senator Tom Casperson (R-Escanaba) held a hearing last week on Senate Bills 39 and 40, commonly referred to as "land cap" legislation, which seek to limit the ability of the DNR to acquire additional land in Northern Michigan without legislative approval of a statewide land management plan. Senator Casperson has been working on this legislation for a number of years given widespread concern in Northern Michigan, particularly among local units of government, over the amount of land in state ownership currently off local tax rolls and the inability of the state even to make reduced Payments in Lieu of Taxes or "PILT" payments on lands already in state ownership. SB 39 and 40 make a number of modifications and reforms to state land management which enjoy broad support in Northern Michigan, particularly in Upper Peninsula communities, but have generated opposition from some environmental and conservation groups as well.

Senator Casperson is also working on legislation to enact reforms to the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund (MNRTF) in order to provide more flexibility and modernize the MNRTF distribution formula to meet current natural resource needs. The legislation, Senate Bill 16 and Senate Joint Resolution C, would shift the allocation formula away from acquisition and expand the allowable use of trust fund dollars available for development. One particular change MWA supports in the legislation is allowing MNRTF dollars to be utilized for aquatic invasive species management and eradication.

While Senate Bill 16 could be signed into law by Governor Snyder with passage by the Legislature, an accompanying amendment to the Michigan Constitution is necessary as well to amend allocation and distribution of MNRTF dollars. Amendments to the Michigan Constitution, such as SJR C, need to be approved with both a 2/3 supermajority in each chamber and approval by the voting public at the next General Election.

MWA is very encouraged by Senator Casperson's work on both issues, and we will keep members updated should any action happen on any of these proposals before the Legislature adjourns in mid-June or over the summer. When the Legislature breaks in mid-June, they will return for three weeks in September and then for 3-4 additional weeks of "lame duck" session after the November Election.

Matt Kurta

121 W. Allegan Street | Lansing, MI 48933 T: 517-482-5000 M: 517-303-3961 www.karoub.com | mkurta@karoub.com

(For review of other watershed legislative matters, see our web site - <http://www.mwai.org/>)