

March 2018

## **SNYDER TO WALSH: SET ASIDE MONEY FOR SCHOOL SAFETY**

No ballpark number has been given at this point, but Governor Rick Snyder has advised Budget Director John Walsh to set aside some state money for school safety.

The executive office is doing due diligence and an “extensive review” of what other states are proposing on the school safety issue and a dollar figure will likely be determined from whatever emerges from that study.

## **SHIRKEY: USE RAINY DAY MONEY FOR SCHOOL SAFETY**

Senator Mike Shirkey (R-Clarklake) says he would like to see the state use as much as a “majority” of the projected \$889 million in the state’s rainy day fund for a school safety initiative.

Senator Shirkey said the Budget Stabilization Fund (BSF) is an “emergency fund” and what the country is seeing now regarding school security qualifies as an emergency.

However, Budget Director John Walsh isn’t buying it. “Our preference is on the saving side and to maintain it”, Walsh said. “The goal is stability for the state in the long term...and we should continue to build it up.”

## **SENATE DEMS HAVE THEIR OWN IDEAS FOR SCHOOL SAFETY**

Rosie Jones, spokesperson for the Senate Democrats, that legislation will be coming soon on the topic, but she is not sure whether it will be in the form of a bill package or a string of individual bills.

Some ideas the Caucus is considering:

- A robust criminal background system in Michigan where gun sellers should report persons who are ineligible to purchase weapons but attempt to do so.
- Adopting the “red-flag” legislation allowing a family member or law enforcement to petition for a temporary seizure of a weapon if somebody is believed to pose a threat to themselves or others.
- Close the open-carry loophole and make schools truly gun-free zones and start providing school safety funds.

## **ONLINE VOTER REGISTRATION MOVING FORWARD**

Election committees in both the House and Senate appear to be moving forward on legislation that would create a system to allow Michigan residents to register to vote online through the Secretary of State’s *ExpressSOS.com*.

The Senate Elections and Government Reform Committee voted 5-0 to move legislation (SB 425 – SB 429) to the Senate floor.

The House Elections and Ethics Committee has taken up a two-bill package (HB 5548 and HB 5549) that would do the same thing. The committee has yet to take a vote.

### **MORE MONEY FOR ROADS**

The Legislature has sent the Governor \$175 million in leftover General Fund dollars from last year in additional dollars for state and local transportation departments to fix roads.

Governor Rick Snyder initially proposed using the money on roads in 2019 but House Speaker Tom Leonard (R-DeWitt) proposed using it right away and the idea was quickly agreed to.

A Democrat amendment to put another \$275 million from the state's Rainy Day Fund failed to gain traction.

### **DRIVER RESPONSIBILITY FEES COMING TO AN END**

Governor Rick Snyder has signed into law legislation that ends the Driver Responsibility Fees on October 1 of this year – a year earlier than they had been scheduled to end.

The Department of Treasury will have to stop collecting outstanding fees, estimated to be \$637 million on more than 300,000 drivers.

The new law also eliminates the \$125 charged by the Secretary of State to reinstate a license that was suspended because of the unpaid DRF's through the end of the year.

### **HOUSE DEMS TOP PRIORITY IS TUITION-FREE COMMUNITY COLLEGES**

Community college should be "tuition free" for all state residents, according to House Democrats who have rolled out their 2018 priorities.

Democrats say it could be paid for through new revenue from a "fair tax structure," otherwise known as a graduated income tax that according to them would generate an additional \$870 million to cover the cost.

They estimate that in fiscal year 2016, community college tuition and fees totaled \$603 million.

Other priorities on the House Dem's agenda included making health care affordable, supporting student success, building quality infrastructure and building an economy that works for everyone.

The priorities are detailed in a document titled "Building Opportunity For All."

### **LEGISLATION ZEROS IN ON DRUG COMPANIES**

Legislation introduced by House Representative Darrin Camilleri (D-Brownstown Twp.) and Representative LaTanya Garrett (D-Detroit) would require pharmaceutical companies to show how prescription costs are determined and where their money is spent.

HB 5690 and HB 5691 would require drug manufacturers to justify to a new 13-member prescription consumer protection board where a specific drug was increasing more than 12 percent over a two-year period.

The board could impose \$100,000 per day penalties for uncooperative companies and get the Attorney General to investigate any manufacturer that has charged “excessive and unconscionable prices.”

### **JOHNSON RESIGNS FROM THE SENATE**

After pleading guilty to one count of “conspiracy to commit theft from a federally funded program,” Bert Johnson resigned from his Senate seat.

Senate Minority Leader Jim Ananich (D-Flint) has called on Governor Rick Snyder to immediately call a special election to fill the seat with the idea of having a new senator sworn in no later than August.