

May 2018

## **RENEWABLE ENERGY DEAL STRUCK; PROPOSAL OFF BALLOT**

Environmentalist billionaire Tom Steyer is dropping his effort to put before the voters in November a ballot proposal that would raise the state's renewable portfolio standard to 30 percent by 2030.

Mr. Steyer made his move after Consumers Energy and DTE Energy announced they had reached a deal with him by announcing they are vowing a 50 percent "clean energy goal" by 2030. At least half would come through more renewable energy and the rest through energy efficiency.

The Steyer group had until the end of this month to turn in its 253,000 valid signatures to make the November ballot. Clean Energy, Healthy Michigan campaign manager John Freeman said he had 350,000 signatures ready to submit to the Secretary of State.

## **STRICTER LEAD RULES FOR WATER ABOUT DONE**

The strictest drinking water rules for lead in the country are about complete, according to the Snyder administration.

The plan would eventually result in the replacement of all 500,000 lead service pipes in Michigan—a move that is drawing opposition from municipalities and utilities.

The proposed lead and copper rules will take effect unless a legislative committee objects by June, which is not likely given the lawmakers successfully pushed the state Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) to scale back portions of the proposal that could still cost \$2.5 billion over decades. Expect the cost to largely come from water customers.

## **BETTING ON SPORTS BETTING IN MICHIGAN COULD BE A SAFE BET**

After the U.S. Supreme Court let the issue out of the starting gate last week by giving the state the ability to regulate the running of a sports book for gaming operations, the Michigan House Regulatory Reform Committee may schedule a hearing this week to permit casinos to offer sports team wagers.

Committee Chair Representative Brandt Iden (R-Oshtemo Twp.) and Representative Robert Kosowski (D-Westland) are working together to pass their bills.

Representative Kosowski said he expects opposition from those concerned about more social ills, but added if that is the problem, "...let's blow up the whole system..." if gambling is wrong.

Representative Iden says he wants to move the package out of the House by June 21, but Kosowski says he had heard that Speaker Tom Leonard (R-DeWitt) has not yet signed off.

## **HICA TAX REPEAL GOES TO THE HOUSE**

The Senate has passed and sent to the House legislation (SB 992 – SB 994) that would repeal the Health Insurance Claims Assessment (HICA) Tax and create a new Insurance Provider Assessment (IPA) tax to take its place.

The HICA tax is a 0.75 percent tax on paid health insurance claims. The new IPA Tax would assess a tax on health insurers on a per-member-per-month basis.

Senator Ken Horn (R-Frankenmuth), sponsor of SB 992, said if nothing was done, “...we were playing ‘chicken’ with a \$420 million hole in our budget...”.

## **FROM ANTI-POT TO PRO-POT**

First, the Committee to Keep Pot out of Neighborhoods and Schools was fighting a ballot proposal to legalize marijuana. Now, it is urging the Legislature to take up the initiative, amend it and pass legislation for adult recreational use.

Why the change of heart? The committee hopes that if the Legislature acts, recreational use will be as stringently regulated as the medical marijuana industry.

If the Legislature does not take it up and the measure goes on the November 6 statewide ballot, the group will go back to its original purpose of opposing the legalization of marijuana.

## **MORE BUCKS FOR THE BUDGET**

Updated revenue estimates set by state economists last week indicate Governor Rick Snyder and legislators will have a combined \$500 million more than expected for this fiscal year and next fiscal year.

There is \$315 million more for this year—about half of which is “one-time money” and \$182.4 million more for next year.

The numbers were reached through the May Consensus Revenue Estimating Conference.

It is being suggested that some of the money go to fix the roads, school safety, state savings and paying down long-term debt.

One thing is nearly certain—most, if not all will be spent.

## **TESTING PUBLIC WATER SUPPLIES FOR PFAS IS UNDERWAY**

In what the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) believes is the first of its kind, the state has begun a \$1.7 million study into per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) in public water supplies.

The DEQ is sending out letters to Michigan’s 1,380 public water systems outlining its effort and its goal to complete the statewide study by the end of this year. The study will also include 461 schools that operate their own well.

The chemical is known to be in firefighting foams, cleaning products, household cookware, carpets and food packaging. The impact the chemicals may have on humans is not yet clear.

### **STATE SUPERINTENDENT WHISTON PASSES AWAY AT AGE 56**

Pancreatic cancer has taken the life of State Superintendent Brian Whiston. He was diagnosed with the disease in late 2017 and had officially gone on long-term disability just days before his passing.

Mr. Whiston was hired by the State Board of Education (SBE) in 2015 and is credited with initiating the Top 10 in 10 initiative, a strategic vision and plan to make Michigan a top 10 state in 10 years.

Mr. Whiston had asked Chief Deputy Superintendent Sheila Alles to take his place for the interim and the SBE has agreed to appoint her as the interim replacement. The SBE is restricted from offering a contract to a superintendent six months before, and two months after a general election where SBE members are elected, so a permanent replacement for Mr. Whiston is not expected until sometime after the November election.