

GOP DPS PLANS DIFFER BETWEEN HOUSE AND SENATE

A package of Republican legislation introduced in the House to help the beleaguered Detroit Public Schools (DPS) system differs greatly from a plan introduced by Republicans in the Senate.

The House plan calls for a wait of eight years to fully elect a new school board and also places some restrictions on collective bargaining. The Senate plan would have a school board election this November and does not address the issue of collective bargaining.

In addition to phasing in an elected school board and prohibiting collective bargaining rights on items such as school calendar, work schedules and contracting with third-party vendors, the House plan would:

- Keep the old district and new district philosophy as put forth by Governor Rick Snyder;
- Convert new DPS employees from the traditional pension system to a 401(k) ótype system;
- Use general fund dollars for 10 years to pay off the DPS debt; and,
- Create an A-F building grading system for Detroit schools, including charters,that would be available to parents.

The plan has already drawn strong objection from House Democrats and the American Federation of Teachers-Michigan.

Senate Majority Leader Arlan Meekhof (R-West Olive) urged caution on the House package because the Senate has been working on the issue for months. The Senate began hearings this week on its legislation and those hearings are expected to continue next week.

LEGISLATION INTRODUCED TO COMBAT OPIOID ABUSE

A four-bill package of legislation (SBs 769 thru 772) has been introduced in the Senate to address the growing prescription drug and opiate abuse in the state.

The measures would require doctors to check the Michigan Automated Prescription system before prescribing medications to new patients and failure to do so would require the physician to complete remedial continuing medical education. The bills also would increase penalties for physicians who overprescribe specified controlled substances.

Another set of bills (SB 778 and HB 5326) would increase a pharmacy's ability to dispense Naloxone, a medication used to reverse the side effects of an opioid overdose.

The legislation is part of the recommendations released by the Governor's Prescription Drug and Opioid Abuse Task Force.

NO FIX FOR PA 269...YET

House Bill 5219, that would "fix" the recently enacted law (PA 269) banning schools and local governments from using mailers, media ads or robo-calls to educate voters 60 days before an election has been put on hold by GOP leadership after House Republicans were not able to muster the needed votes for the replacement bill.

The legislation isn't going to move until the bill's sponsor, Rep. Lisa Posthumous Lyons (R-Alto) works through amendments that Republicans and Democrats both offered to her "compromise" bill.

A federal judge has issued a preliminary injunction on one section of the new law.

PRESUMPTIVE PAROLE NOT PROCEEDING FOR NOW

With Sen. Rick Jones (R-Grand Ledge) continuing to hold out against House-passed legislation that removes the amount of subjectivity the Parole Board can use in releasing inmates, the lobbyist for Hope Network, a group pushing the presumptive parole issue says he hasn't tossed in the towel for good. But it is apparent that portion of the legislation isn't going to move anytime soon.

Still left on the table is legislation to reduce the prison head count by releasing the infirm and the elderly.

DEMOCRATS REINTRODUCE FRACKING PACKAGE

An eight-bill package of legislation has been reintroduced by House Democrats that would, according to a press release, increase safeguards on Michigan's fracking industry by putting a halt on new wells until regulations are put in place.

The bills are the same as proposed fracking rule legislation introduced during the 2013-2014 legislative session that went nowhere in the Republican-controlled Legislature.

The measures would require oil and gas drillers to use the state water withdrawal assessment tool to monitor impacts on all waterways when their water use exceeds 100,000 gallons a month; ban the use of fracking wastewater as a roadway dust control spray; allow local governments or interested parties to request a public hearing on a permit application in the community where the well would be located; and allow local units of government to regulate fracking operations in their communities.

HOUSE PASSES MONEY FOR FLINT WATER BILLS

The House passed and sent to the Senate and then to the Governor for his expected signature a current year supplemental bill (SB 136) that provides \$30 million to provide a 65 percent credit on any water bill Flint residents received from April 2014 to April 2016. The measure implements Governor Rick Snyder's "Consumption and Consumer Use Credit."

HOUSE PUTS BRAKES ON SPEED LIMIT BILL

Legislation that would allow for 80 mile speed limits on some Michigan freeways came to a quick halt in the House when the main bill in the five-bill package fell three votes short needed for passage. Two of the bills passed (HBs 4426 and 4427) but were pulled after the main bill (HB 4423) faltered. Votes on the others were reconsidered and passed for the day.

MICHIGAN HALTS WORK ON NEW FEDERAL POWER PLANT STANDARDS

After the U.S. Supreme Court last week blocked the new U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) rules aimed at curbing carbon emissions from coal power plants, the Michigan Agency for Energy (MAE) announced it would suspend activities to comply with the rule and its timeline for submissions while it waits for resolutions through the courts.

JUDGE SUES OVER AGE RESTRICTION

Court of Appeals Judge Peter O'Connell has filed suit in the Court of Claims in an effort to circumvent the state's constitutional limitation on judicial candidates running for election or re-election once they reach the age of 70. The suit was filed against the Bureau of Elections in an attempt to run for a seat on the Court of Appeals two years early. O'Connell's current term expires January 1, 2019 at which time he will be 70. He is seeking to run for a six-year Court of Appeals term this November.

SPECIAL ELECTION SET TO FILL MILLER SEAT

Voters in the 28th House District will vote in the August primary and again in the November general election to fill the vacant seat of Derek Miller (D-Warren) who resigned to become the Macomb County Treasurer. Voters will decide who will fill the remaining few weeks of Miller's term ending December 31 and who will hold seat for a new two-year term beginning January 1.

PETITION FILED TO RECALL LT. GOV. CALLEY

The Board of State Canvassers will meet February 22 to decide if language filed by Genesee County resident Quincy Murphy to recall Lt. Governor Brian Calley meets the clarity standards need for ballot approval. Murphy wants Lt. Governor Calley gone because of an e-mail he wrote to Governor Rick Snyder expressing concern about Flint Clerk Inez Brown publishing of a wrong deadline to turn in their petition signatures for Flint mayor and city council.