

MOTORCYCLE ACCIDENT TAKES REPRESENTATIVE PETTALIA'S LIFE

Representative Peter Pettalia (Presque Isle) was killed last week in a motorcycle accident as he was returning to Lansing.

A memorial service has been held for the popular third-term lawmaker.

House Speaker Kevin Cotter (R-Mt. Pleasant) has appointed new members to committee vacancies left by Representative Pettalia.

Representative Ben Glardon (R-Owosso) will assume chairmanship of the House Transportation Committee. Representative Jeff Farrington (R-Utica) will serve as the committee's vice chair and Representative Gary Howell (R-North Branch) will fill the remaining vacancy on the committee.

Representative Mike Callton (R-Nashville) will take up the role as vice chair of the Financial Services Committee and Representative Ken Goike (R-Ray Twp.) will fill the remaining vacancy.

Representative Ray Franz (R-Onekama) will fill Representative Pettalia's spot on the Energy Committee and Representative Joel Johnson (R-Clare) will take up the vacancy on the Tourism and Outdoor Recreation Committee

SCOTUS SHUTS DOWN SCHUETTE

Attorney General Bill Schuette's emergency appeal to keep a ban on straight ticket voting in place was denied Friday by the U.S. Supreme Court. So it means the straight-ticket voting bubble will more likely than not be back for the November election.

Mr. Schuette took the appeal to the highest court in the land after a federal judge in Michigan ordered a preliminary injunction on its immediate implementation.

Friday was the state's deadline to finalize ballots for the November election.

The two-sentence order issued by SCOTUS read: "the application for stay presented to Justice Kagan and by her referred to the Court is denied. Justice Thomas and Justice Alito would grant the application."

SBE OFFERS SCHOOLS GUIDANCE ON LGBTQ

On a party-line vote the State Board of Education (SBE) approved a guidance document advising Michigan's public schools to allow transgender students to use the bathroom and locker room corresponding to their gender.

The SBE document says transgender students have the right to use the bathroom of their gender identity if they choose, and that no transgender student should be forced to use a changing facility incongruent with their gender identity.

The SBE document made reference to a federal guidance issued in May by the U.S. Departments of Education and Justice to use as its legal basis for the recommendations.

BEER TAX INCREASE INTRODUCED

The tax on beer in Michigan has not been raised since 1966, but Representative Thomas Hooker (R-Byron Center) wants to change that.

Representative Hooker has introduced legislation (HB 5873) that increases the tax from 1.9 cents per 12 ounce bottle or can to 6.9 cents, nearly 250 percent and uses that money primarily for substance abuse treatment and increased enforcement of alcohol related crimes. The measure, for the first time, indexes the tax to the rate of inflation.

The bill isn't likely to get a hearing before the November 8 election. In fact, the bill is unlikely to get any hearing and Representative Hooker will be leaving the Legislature at the end of this year because of term limits.

SENATE PASSES MEDICAL MARIJUANA LEGISLATION

The Senate passed legislation (HB 4209 and HB 4827) that creates a regulatory framework for the use of medical marijuana.

Specifically, the bills create five different licenses for the legal sale of medical marijuana growing, testing, processing, transporting and selling through provisioning centers.

After passing the House, the entire package was being held up in the Senate over the issue of edibles, marijuana infused products made for those who can't inhale smoke.

The bills create a 3 percent tax on marijuana and give locals the authority to better regulate where and how many provisioning centers can be in a community. A five member board would be created to implement the new regulations and state licensed activities involving medical marijuana would be protected.

SENATE DRIVES AUTONOMOUS VEHICLES LEGISLATION TO THE HOUSE

The Senate last week passed and sent to the House a four bill package (SBs 995 through 998) that is designed to authorize the testing of autonomous vehicle research in Michigan.

Under the bills, autonomous vehicles would be given the go ahead for testing on 122 miles of Michigan roads, would authorize that Willow Run airport be developed a testing facility for the vehicles, and would create the Michigan Council on Future Mobility within MDOT which will provide recommendations for ongoing policy changes needed as development of the vehicles progresses.

EM LAW IS UPHELD

Unless the nation's highest court says otherwise, Michigan's emergency manager law is here to stay.

The 6th Circuit Court of Appeals has ruled the law did not violate constitutional rights under the First and Thirteenth Amendments and the voting rights act, thus affirming the decision of the district court.

In *Phillips, et al. v. Snyder, et al.*, the three judge panel voted unanimously to hold to U. S. Supreme Court precedent by ruling that states have absolute discretion to control their political subdivisions.

SUPREMES SNUFF OUT THE MARIJUANA LEGALIZATION PETITION CASE

A leave to appeal has been denied by the Michigan Supreme Court to attorney Jeffrey Hank in his effort to get legalized marijuana on the November ballot. Now Hank has pledged to seek appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court.

The denial was in the case *MILegalize v. Secretary of State, Bureau of Elections and Board of State Canvassers*, which Hank filed after his group failed to gather enough valid signatures under the state's 180 day window, requiring the state to deny certification.

The order issued by the MSC said the court was not persuaded and the questions presented should be reviewed.

COURT RULES ON MCCA'S FOIA EXEMPTION

A three judge panel of the Court of Appeals has ruled that the Michigan Catastrophic Claims Associate (MCCA) is a public body and does not need to respond to Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests.

The ruling comes after the Michigan Supreme Court asked the appellate court to answer those questions.

The three judge panel ruled that the MCCA is a public body and the Legislature did not violate the constitution when it exempted the public body from releasing its records to the public.

The insurance industry groups applauded the ruling and used the moment to again promote their push for no fault reform.