

October 2017

ALTERNATIVE NO-FAULT AUTO INSURANCE REFORM BILLS INTRODUCED

With the Leonard-Duggan auto insurance reform legislation having a bumpy ride in the House, a bipartisan coalition of lawmakers has introduced an 11- bill package that would reduce rates by 20 to 30 percent without cutting benefits.

The alternative package would also create fee schedules for medical services, coordinate auto policies with health insurance policies, and reform use of non-driving factors in rate setting, regulate home health care of accident victims and add fraud prevention.

The legislation (HB 5101 - HB 5111) has the support of the Coalition to Protect Auto No-Fault (CPAN).

A major stumbling block for the bipartisan group to the Leonard-Duggan proposal appears to be keeping tiered PIP levels in place.

The Leonard-Duggan measure would cut the state's high auto premiums by at least 20 percent. Drivers would no longer be required to purchase unlimited medical insurance to cover serious crash injuries. Auto insurers would reimburse health providers treating car crash victims in a similar manner to how Medicare works.

STATE'S TOP MEDICAL DIRECTOR FACES NEW CHARGES

Dr. Eden Wells, the state's top medical director, is facing two new charges -- involuntary manslaughter and misconduct in office -- in connection with the Flint water crisis.

The charges were announced by Special Prosecutor, Todd Flood while Dr. Wells was in court for a preliminary exam on two previous charges – obstruction of justice and lying to a peace officer.

That hearing was delayed until November 6 after Mr. Flood announced the new charges.

According to Mr. Flood, the potential new charges were the result of testimony in the preliminary exam for Michigan Department of Health and Human Services Director Nick Lyon, who is facing multiple charges in the Flint water crisis.

HOUSE RESOLUTION WOULD ABOLISH THE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

HJR M would eliminate the eight-member State Board of Education and give the governor the power to appoint the state superintendent, who would then oversee the Department of Education.

Of course, the constitutional amendment would have to gain two-thirds approval from the Legislature to be placed on the ballot for a final decision by the voters.

GOVERNOR SNYDER GETS ANTI-SODA TAX BILL

Local governments would be prohibited from imposing taxes or fees on the sale of soda pop, food, or chewing gum under legislation (HB 4999) passed by the Senate and sent to the Governor.

But the bill's main purpose, according to committee testimony, is to pre-empt the taxing of soda by local units of government – taxes that are not being levied in Michigan but have been enacted in other states.

The measure passed the Senate on a 30-5 vote and earlier cleared the House 101-7.

MEEKHOF PUSHES FOR EXPANSION OF PRIVATE POLICING

Colleges, hospitals, and malls would be allowed to hire a private police force with the authority to make arrests under legislation (SB 594 and SB 595) that Senate Majority Leader Arlan Meekhof (R-West Olive) says he is determined to pass.

Senator Meekhof introduced the bills and sent them to the Senate Government Operations Committee, which he chairs. The legislation faces strong opposition from a variety of police organizations.

SENATE PASSES DRF BILLS

The Senate has passed its version of Driver Responsibility Fee (DRF) elimination bills which frees drivers with an unpaid DRF of six or more years. It also allows drivers with fees issued more recently to keep their driver's license while paying off their outstanding fees.

The House version wipes away all DRFs from all drivers, giving them a clean slate as of October 2018.

As yet, the Governor's office has not commented on either one.

CHARTER SCHOOLS COULD RECEIVE MORE PUBLIC MONEY

Charter schools in the state would be allowed to collect revenues from enhancement millages levied by intermediate school districts as a result of a controversial bill (SB 0574) that has cleared the Senate.

An amendment was added to the bill that states when a charter school district was geographically located in more than one county, and an enhancement millage in one or more of those counties, the funding could only be used with the county that passed the millage.

GOVERNOR SNYDER SIGNS SuperPAC REGULATIONS

Governor Rick Snyder has signed into law legislation (SB 335 and SB 336) that would codify how the state already oversees political SuperPACS to exist under state law. SuperPACS are independent committees able to raise unlimited sums of money from corporations, unions and other entities.

The bills put into statute current Secretary of State practice for independent expenditure committees spawned from a U.S. Supreme Court decision that will allow the SuperPACS to continue to collect unlimited amounts.

The bills are now Public Acts 119 and 120.

COLBECK LOSES COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS

Senator Patrick Colbeck (R-Canton) is a Senator without any committee assignments.

Senate Republican Press Secretary Amber McCann would provide no additional details, saying only that it was a caucus matter and not to expect any comments from Senate Majority Leader Arlan Meekhof (R-West Olive). The Senate Business Officer will handle all office functions such as staff, constituent mailings, and budget matters.

It is known that Senator Colbeck, a gubernatorial candidate, has gone against the wishes of his caucus colleagues when making unannounced visits into their districts. Apparently, the final straw was when he attended a Right to Life banquet in Senator Meekhof's home district.

NO SUPRISE HERE

What had been speculated for months is now official.

House Speaker Tom Leonard (R-DeWitt) has announced he is a candidate for Attorney General in 2018 and sees no problem in being both the Speaker and a candidate for higher office. He will have opposition from at least Senator Tonya Schuitmaker (R-Lawton).

Speaker Leonard, a former assistant attorney general, is serving out his last allowable House term under term limits.

On the Democrat side, former U.S. Attorney David Miles and Civil Rights Attorney Dana Nessel have announced they are candidates for the Michigan Attorney General slot and Jocelyn Benson is seeking, for the second time, an attempt to become Michigan's Secretary of State.

BIPARTISAN WORKGROUP OFFERS UIA CLEAN-UP BILLS

An eight-bill package of legislation is being prepared that would clean up the inner workings of the Unemployment Insurance Agency (UIA) in an effort to correct automated computer problems that resulted in recipients being falsely accused of fraud.

The bills would scale back penalties of those who improperly collect UIA benefits and create a quicker system by which the state can stop payments to identify thieves caught trying to scam the system.

Some Democrats pointed out that the package does not attempt to reimburse those who were falsely accused of fraud through the automated system.

However, the UIA announced earlier that it would refund \$20.8 million to those falsely accused of fraud.

