

December 2019

INTERNET GAMING, SPORTS BETTING LEGISLATION HEADED TO THE GOVERNOR

With lawmakers wrapping up their last session day of the year before heading home for the holidays, the House and Senate sent a 10-bill package of Internet and sports betting legislation to Governor Gretchen Whitmer who is expected to sign them into law.

The measures will allow existing licensed casinos to offer poker, blackjack, slots and other casino-style games over the Internet. In addition, the legislation provides for Fantasy Contests and the licensing of “third-party facilitators” who could take bets on horse races electronically, in addition to the bets that can be placed live or simulcast races at the track, under existing law.

State Representative Brandt Iden (R-Oshtemo Twp.) said he is hopeful the Gaming Control Board will be able to promulgate the rules needed within the next 60 to 90 days to let casinos roll out the new offerings in time for men’s NCAA basketball tournament in March.

Representative Iden said, based on prior research, it is estimated the new gaming options would bring in \$100 million a year for schools and the sports betting piece should bring in \$35 to \$50 million alone.

IT’S A DONE DEAL, ALMOST

The House and Senate have passed, and sent to Governor Gretchen Whitmer, a deal that was struck between Republican legislative leaders and Governor Whitmer that brings almost to a close the ongoing dispute over the Fiscal Year (FY) 2020 budget.

In addition to the \$573.5 million in restored spending contained in two supplemental bills (SBs 152 and 154) Governor Whitmer agreed to give the Legislature a 30-day heads up if the state Administrative Board attempts to move money around with departments (HB 5176), which gives the Legislature the ability pre-emptively to act.

That little nugget – the agreed upon State Administrative Board changes – was worth the than 70 days it took to get more of the Fiscal Year 2020 budget done, Senate Majority Leader Mike Shirkey (R-Clarklake) told reporters.

The negotiated supplemental restores funding for health care, rural and urban hospitals, tethers to monitor dangerous felons and vocational funding.

However, what was not included was the \$375 million lawmakers wanted to spend for roads, the Pure Michigan marketing program, and Governor Whitmer’s proposed Michigan Reconnect job training program. Legislative leaders and the Governor will pick up conversations on those items after the New Year’s holiday, according to Senate Appropriations Chair Jim Stamas (R-Midland).

The Governor has indicated she will put forth a new gas tax proposal to ‘fix the damn roads’ to replace her heavily-touted 45-cent tax increase that did not garner legislative support.

BUT WHAT ABOUT LOCAL ROAD TAX HIKES?

While Governor Gretchen Whitmer’s road tax has hit the stop light, Representative Jack O’Malley’s (R-Lake Ann) House Transportation Committee is readying an optional local gas tax measure that would give counties the right to raise the gas tax, with those dollars going to fix local roads in those jurisdictions. The proposal is being met with strong opposition from gas station owners.

SOS LAUNCHING NEW SELF-SERVICE STATIONS

Out with the old kiosks. In with new user-friendly self-service stations to replace 93 existing kiosks and 57 more for a total of 150, according to Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson. New stations will be located in grocery stores, including Kroger and Meijer, where many customers already do business.

Customers will pay a technology fee of \$3.95 for every vehicle renewed at a self-service station.

The stations will offer tab renewals for automobiles, motorcycles, and watercraft. It is expected all the kiosks will be replaced by the end of January.

FORMER LEGISLATORS TAKE ON TERM LIMITS

A legal challenge of Michigan’s term limits has been filed in the Western District Court of Michigan by eight former state lawmakers asking the court to throw out the term limits voters added to the constitution in 1992.

According to attorney John Bursch, the lawsuit will test a theory that has never been tried before in the federal courts.

The suit is going only after legislative seats, but, if successful, it would set the legal groundwork to get all Michigan term limits tossed.

GOVERNOR WHITMER TO SUPREME COURT: TAKE IMMEDIATE ACTION IN VAPING CASES

Following an appeals court denial of the state’s request to put on hold a lower court’s decision to allow retail sale of flavored vaping products, Governor Gretchen Whitmer is asking the Michigan Supreme Court to take immediate action on vaping cases.

The court filing claims if immediate action is not taken to stay the Court of Claims Judge Cynthia Diane Stephens grant of a preliminary injunction, “this state stands to bear the financial and social costs of poor health outcomes for decades.”

GOVERNOR WHITMER ASKS, SENATOR SHIRKEY SAYS NO

Governor Gretchen Whitmer is urging the Legislature to pass legislation that would pause the implementation of the Medicaid work requirements in Michigan until the federal courts determine whether or not they are legal.

But Senate Majority Leader Mike Shirkey in quick response to her request told reporters, “Nope, not necessary.”

In her first special message, Governor Whitmer noted that pushing ahead will cost the state an estimated \$40 million in Fiscal Year (FY) 2020 to notify Medicaid recipients and monitor whether the roughly 270,000 recipients are working 80 hours a month or going through job training starting January 1.

CAMERAS COULD BE ADDED TO SCHOOL BUS STOP-ARMS

Legislation (HB 5041) has been introduced by Representative Tyrone Carter (D-Detroit) that would allow for stop-arm camera systems to be added to school buses to photograph or video the license plate numbers of cars that pass illegally while students are loading or unloading.

Representative Greg VanWoerkom (R-Norton Shores) introduced House Bill 5042 that would allow for cameras for the addition of cameras to school buses, at the discretion of the school district.

And due to what Representative Jack O’Malley says is an increase in road rage directed at school buses and their drivers, he has introduced House Bill 5038 that would make it a misdemeanor to board a bus without permission and one-year felony to board a school bus to do bodily harm.

LG GILCHRIST SIGNS CAGE-FREE EGG LEGISLATION

Lt. Governor Garlin Gilchrist has signed into law legislation (SB 174) that would require egg producers to make sure all Michigan egg-laying hens are in cage-free systems. The law takes effect in December 2024.

The cage-free standard also ensures no non-cage-free eggs will legally be allowed to be sold in Michigan by that date.

Michigan now becomes the fifth state and the largest egg-producing state in the nation to adopt a cage-free requirement.