

KAROUB REPORT

HOUSE PASSES THIRD GRADE READING BILL

In an effort to get elementary students to read at a third grade level before advancing on to the fourth grade, the House this week finally, on a 57-48 vote, garnered the necessary support to move the measure to the Senate.

Those supporting the measure (HB 4822) praised it as a victory for students. Opponents argued it potentially will flunk more kids who are trying their best to improve.

The bill is aimed at giving schools more tools to help with literacy between kindergarten and third grade, as well as provide more opportunities for interventions and coaching for students who are struggling.

By the 2019-2020 school year, students who haven't obtained a reading score that is less than one grade level behind would be stopped from moving to the fourth grade, with some exemptions.

EDUCATION EVALUATION REFORMS ALSO WIN HOUSE APPROVAL

Legislation (SB 103) that would set standards for how teachers are evaluated has easily won approval in the House.

Under the bill, school districts would be able to develop their own evaluation tools and the state would establish a list of recommended tools. In addition, the teacher's evaluation based on student growth or assessment data would rise from 25 percent in the next three school years to 40 percent beginning in the 2018-2019 school year.

Although the House made revisions to the Senate bill, there is optimism that the House passed version will meet with Senate approval.

GOVERNOR SNYDER QUICKLY SIGNS FLINT WATER FIX BILL

After quick approval of a request by Governor Rick Snyder for the state to pick up half of a \$12 million dollar cost of switching Flint back to the Detroit water system, the Legislature gave quick approval to the supplemental appropriations bill (HB 4102) and Governor Snyder wasted no time in signing it into law.

The Mott Foundation is kicking in \$4 million and the City of Flint is picking up the other \$2 million.

The move is an effort to reconnect Flint to the Detroit water system until a different pipeline that will not react badly to the city's lead pipes and cause lead poisoning can be obtained.

ROAD FUNDING TALKS IN A "COOLING OFF" PERIOD

Last week the legislative quadrant came to an impasse on a solution to that \$1.2 billion road funding package over a dispute about a proposed income tax rollback.

The talks broke down when House Minority Leader Tim Greimel (D-Auburn Hills) objected to an across the board rollback of the income tax and what role it would play in the package that includes a gas tax increase and possibly higher driver registration fees.

The impasse quickly turned into a "cooling off" period when Governor Rick Snyder cancelled a meeting scheduled for a day later.

SENATE APPROVES ASSET FORFEITURE REFORM

A seven bill civil asset forfeiture package that cleared the House in June gained unanimous approval in the Senate last week, substantively unchanged by either the Senate Judiciary Committee or the full Senate.

The bills now go back to the House and then on to Governor Rick Snyder who is expected to sign them.

House Bills 4500, 4503, 4504, 4506 and 4507 require police to file detailed annual reports with the state when property is forfeited, noting if a person was charged or convicted of a crime, the value of the assets, a description of the property and arrangements between local, state and federal agencies, among other things.

House Bills 4499 and 4505 raise the standard of evidence needed to forfeit property to "clear and convincing" from "preponderance of the evidence," which may cut down on how often police use the forfeiture power.

HOUSE MAKES CHANGES TO MEDICAL MARIJUANA REGULATIONS

A 52 page bill (HB 4209), which has been in the works for more than a decade cleared the House this week on a 95-11 vote. The measure revamps regulations on medical marijuana and also imposes a 3 percent tax on the gross retail income of the provisioning centers that sell the product. The normal sales tax would also still apply to the sales.

The measure calls for a five member state board to help implement the new regulations, state licensed activities involving medical marijuana would be protected, and municipalities would have the choice of whether to authorize medical marijuana facilities within their boundaries.

The bill also establishes regulatory assessment and licenses for growers, processors, provision centers and transporters.

DEMS: LET SCHOOLS DECIDE ON OPEN CARRY

Democrat members in the House want to let schools and daycare centers decide whether to allow individuals to openly carry guns on their properties.

The primary bill (HB 4944) is designed to settle a dispute over state law that allows concealed pistol license holders to carry their weapons openly, but not concealed inside places like schools, daycares and churches.

LARSEN APPOINTED TO THE STATE SUPREME COURT

Joan Larsen, a U of M professor and dean for student and graduate activities has been named by Governor Rick Snyder to the state Supreme Court, replacing Justice Mary Beth Kelly, who stepped down this week for a private sector job.

Joan Larsen is a former law clerk for U.S. Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia and U.S. Deputy Assistant Attorney General in the Office of Legal Counsel.

In another court appointment, Governor Snyder named Oakland County Circuit Court Judge Colleen O'Brien to replace retiring Court of Appeals Judge Pat Donofrio.

And Court of Appeals Judge Michael J. Talbot has been reappointed as the chief judge of the Michigan Court of Appeals for a two year term starting January 1, 2016. Judge Talbot is also chief judge for the Court of Claims.

DEMOCRATS WANT TO INCREASE TAX CREDITS TO THE TUNE OF \$1 BILLION

Democrats in the House and Senate are touting a proposal to lessen the tax burden on families, seniors and individuals by about \$1 billion by creating new credits for families making up to \$100,000, expanding the Homestead Property Tax Credit and establishing a credit for those paying back college loans.

They are calling the plan the "Blueprint for Michigan Families."

To pay for the plan, House Minority Leader Tim Greimel (D-Auburn Hills) suggested a "modest bump" in the Corporate Income Tax and renegotiating Michigan Economic Authority tax credits that have been promised to businesses over the years.

EFFORTS UNDER WAY TO REFORM THE MICHIGAN TAX TRIBUNAL

Senate legislation (SB 537) would make several significant changes to the makeup and proceedings of the Michigan Tax Tribunal.

The measure would change who could serve on the board, how they are picked and set additional requirements on tribunal proceedings.

At this point, however, the legislation is a work in progress.

SUPREMES KICK MCCA CASE BACK TO APPELLATE COURT

The case over whether the Michigan Catastrophic Claims Association (MCCA) that pays the expenses of those catastrophically injured in vehicle accidents should open its records to the public has been sent back to the appellate court by the Michigan Supreme Court after hearing oral arguments last week.

The high court wants the lower court to rule on whether the MCCA is a public body, and if so, should it be subject to the Michigan Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)? The MCCA claims it is not a public body, therefore not needing to respond to FOIA.