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To: Council About Parochiaid
From: Cara Spagnuolo
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Re: Legislative Update

Constitutional Convention 2011?

Most state government insiders say they believe that Michigan voters will shoot down a 2010 ballot question that would call for a 2011 constitutional convention, while 55 percent said they don't believe a con-con is needed.

Michigan's Constitution requires that voters be given a chance every 16 years to rewrite the state's governing document. If it is approved in 2011, 148 delegates representing each state House and Senate district would be elected to come to Lansing to review and propose changes to the Constitution.

Henry Woloson of Clarkston, who had a hand in the past failed attempts to make the Legislature part time, is rallying support for a "yes" vote on the question. Woloson will be speaking at CAP's December 4th meeting on his position in favor of a con-con.

John Axe, an attorney and Wayne State University professor, also called for a "yes" vote in 2006 on the basis that those attending the convention would write term limits out of the constitution.

Despite this, 73 percent of capitol insiders said they did not think Michigan voters would opt to call for a con-con, compared to 18 percent who said "yes." The other 9 percent were undecided. Only 35 percent said they thought a con-con was needed anyway and 10 percent were undecided.

These results came as a part of the MIRS-EPIC/MRA Insider Survey, which was emailed to over 1,000 lawmakers, lobbyists, association executives and executive branch officials over a three week period.

U.S. Rep. Pete Hoekstra (R-Holland), a Republican gubernatorial candidate, is against the ballot proposal, claiming that the uncertainty would damage Michigan's already-hurting business community. The Michigan Chamber is expected to lead the charge against a con-con.

CAP's continued interests in a con-con are the church and state issues that may be part of the changes to the Constitution if one were to occur. Ed Sarpolus will be presenting the MEA's opposition to a con-con to CAP members this afternoon.

Gubernatorial Candidates

Lansing attorney Richard McClellan said Friday that House Speaker Andy Dillon is inching closer to a gubernatorial bid in 2010. Mr. McClellan, speaking on "Off the Record," said he spoke last weekend to "some close friends" of Mr. Dillon (D-Redford Township) and that while he was of the mindset prior to that conversation that the speaker would not jump into the race, he now believes it is "likely he may run."

Dillon has said publicly that he will not consider a gubernatorial bid until after the 2009-2010 budget is finished, although some have speculated that his public employee health care pooling proposal, which has received media attention, may be an opening salvo to such a contest.

Rep. Alma Wheeler Smith (D-Salem Twp.), one of the longest serving current members of the Legislature, joined Lt. Governor John Cherry as the only other Democratic candidates seeking the office. In 2002, Ms. Smith ran in the Democratic primary for governor, but ultimately signed on as former U.S. Rep. David Bonior's running mate. Rep. Smith has served in the legislature, first as a Senator, since 1995. She currently heads the Department of Corrections budget subcommittee in the House.

Governor Granholm has publicly endorsed Mr. Cherry as the next governor in several venues and last week took her support to her largest audience to date when she sent an email to supporters across the state urging them to contribute to Mr. Cherry's 2010 gubernatorial campaign. A spokesperson for Mr. Cherry's campaign would not say how many people the email was sent to, but that it was a "significant" number of people. Mr. Cherry has not formally announced his bid for governor in the 2010 election, though he is seen as the favorite to win the Democratic bid and has been the focus of Michigan Republican campaign barbs so far.

Gubernatorial candidates on the Republican side include U.S. Rep. Pete Hoekstra (R-Holland), Attorney General Mike Cox, former Gateway CEO Rick Snyder and Oakland County Sheriff Mike Bouchard. Secretary of State Terri Land took herself out of the running in June and then announced her support for Mr. Bouchard.

Neighborhood Schools Proposal

A proposal that would allow parents and teachers to split their school off from the local district moved to the Senate floor August 26, but Education Committee chair Sen. Wayne Kuipers (R-Holland) committed to substantial work on the package in the coming weeks.

The bills moved on a party-line vote, with Republicans arguing that the proposal expands choice and an opportunity for children to have access to a quality education and Democrats joining school groups in countering that the bills do not provide guarantees that the school will improve or take resources from existing districts.

The package of bills-[SB 636](#), [SB 637](#), [SB 638](#) and [SB 639](#)-allows a majority of both parents and teachers of students attending a school to vote to separate the school from the rest of the district. If the local school board does not approve the split, the group can approach other charter school authorizers to oversee the new school.

According to an August 27 Gongwer News article, school groups all agree this proposal will take resources from the school district without addressing the problems that caused the school to fail in the first place. “In this package, one of the shortfalls is that we don’t believe that it’s a holistic approach to why the school might be failing and helping the district succeed in the long run,” said Don Wotruba, with the Michigan Association of School Boards.

David Stafford with the Michigan Education Association said that in a lot of cases it is school district administration, not activities in the building, that stand in the way of improving schools.

Senator Kuipers said that the legislation would create the streamlined administration that the teacher union is advocating by essentially making the principle the entire administration. He also noted that he planned to negotiate with Rep. Tim Melton (D-Auburn Hills), chair of the House Education Committee, to develop a full reform package from the ones moving in each chamber.

Bills Introduced of Interest to CAP

HB 4609, introduced by Rep. Kim Meltzer (R-Clinton Township), would require expenditure reporting requirements for school districts and public school academies including:

- amount of the school district’s or PSA’s total budget
- number of full time equated pupils served by the school district or PSA
- number of employees
- names and positions of the board or board of directors
- each member of the school board of directors or school administrator of the school district of PSA who have travel expenses during the school fiscal year totaling more than \$3,000 paid for with school district or PSA funds

This bill has been referred to the House Committee on Education.

SB 564, introduced by Sen. Gerald Van Woerkom (R-Norton Shores), would allow charter school enrollment priority to the following pupils: a sibling of a pupil enrolled in the PSA or a pupil who transfers to the PSA from another PSA pursuant to an agreement between the PSAs that provides for this enrollment priority. This bill has been referred to the Senate Committee on Education.

SJR A, introduced by Sen. Mike Bishop (R-Rochester) would provide for limitation of legislative session and repeal of term limits for legislators first serving in 2011 or later.

House Public Employee Healthcare Reform Committee Members 2009-2010

Chair, Pam Byrnes (D-Chelsea)
Vice Chair Tim Melton (D-Auburn Hills)
Harold Haugh (D-Roseville)
Bert Johnson (D-Highland Park)
Michael Lahti (D-Hancock)
Dan Scripps (D-Leland)
Kate Segal (D-Battle Creek)
Woodrow Stanley (D-Flint)
Minority Vice Chair Phil Pavlov (R-St. Clair)
James Bolger (R-Marshall)
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Matt Lori (R-Constantine)
Bill Rogers (R-Brighton)