

PAC Update – July 19, 2017

Before the Legislature recessed last week House Republicans introduced legislation which would ensure various financial aid programs in the state are available only for U.S. citizens and permanent residents. Rep. John Reilly, R-Oakland Township, the primary sponsor of the package, commented that the legislation is needed for programs that lack citizenship requirements and because of "recent movements to make services available to people illegally residing in America". House Bills 4829, 30, 31, 32, 33 and 34 create or clarify citizen requirements for nursing scholarships, the House Development Authority, state competitive scholarships, the part-time independent student grant program, the Michigan Promise grant and work-study programs. The bills were referred to the House Appropriations Committee.

This week Rep. Lee Chatfield, R-Levering and Senator Wayne Schmidt, R-Traverse City hosted a tour of the Soo Locks for fellow legislators to demonstrate the need for a new lock at the Sault Ste. Marie facility. The tour took legislators through the workings of the passageway linking Lake Superior and the Upper Peninsula to the lower Great Lakes. The locks, built between 1896 and 1943, are vital to the national economy with an annual cargo of 75.1 million metric tons going through every year.

Rep Chatfield commented, "Only one of the four locks at the Soo is large enough to accommodate the modern super tankers that commonly traverse the Great Lakes and when it was shut down for 20 days for repairs two years ago, it delayed delivery of nearly 2 million tons of cargo. If something were to happen to the Poe lock and it were shut down the impact on domestic steel production would be catastrophic."

Senator Schmidt stated "Because of the critical importance of the Soo Locks to national and international commerce, Michigan plays an essential role in ensuring the economic health and security of the entire nation. An astonishing 99 percent of the usable iron ore in the United States comes from mines in Michigan and Minnesota, the situation is urgent, Congress must act".

Rep. Triston Cole, R-Manvel, Chair House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee, issued a press release touting the passage of HB 4464 by the House of Representatives. The bill allows applicants to obtain an annual over-sized vehicle transport permit. Rep. Cole commented "Traditionally the driver would have to permit the trailer and every piece of equipment individually that it hauls each time it travels. This bill simplifies the permitting process for vehicles that routinely carry over-sized equipment or routinely exceed weight requirements. The permit may also be stored and presented by the holder using a mobile device. This will make a valid permit easier to access and less than likely to not get lost. H.B. 4644 now moves to the Senate for further consideration. I have requested Senator Tom Casperson, R-Escanaba to schedule the bill for a hearing the first week the Legislature returns for the fall session.

I have requested Senator Casperson to NOT hold a Natural Resources Committee meeting on August 16 when the Legislature returns for a one day session, he has agreed. The committee's standing committee day is a Wednesday. Senator Casperson continues to have concerns about HB 4438. I am hoping his constituent Wayne Stenberg will have time to discuss the bill with Casperson before the August 16 date. I highly recommend we prepare language to require a porta john be pumped before it is moved from filed to field by a farmer; possibly have our attorney prepare an amendment so I can hand it off to either Casperson, Stamas or Schmidt--our strongest opponents to the bill in its current form.

As I stated, the Legislature will return for a one day session on August 16.

