

August 23, 2017 Legislative Update

House Speaker Tom Leonard, R-DeWitt along with Senate Minority Leader, Jim Ananich, D-Flint commented this week they support overriding Governor Rick Snyder's veto of legislation speeding up the phaseout of applying the sales tax to the value of a trade-in when purchasing a vehicle. Senator Majority Leader Arlan Meekhof, R-Olive said he is reserving comment until he discusses the issue with his caucus when the legislature return to Lansing for their fall session on Wednesday, September 6.

On July 25, Governor Snyder vetoed SB 94 and SB 95, which would have increased the amount of a trade-in's value exempt from the sales tax by \$1,000 a year instead of the current \$500. It would have meant totally eliminating tax on the value of a trade-in by 2029 instead of the current 2039. Veto overrides are rare. If the legislature attempts and succeeds it will be the first time since 2002 and the fourth since the 1950's. In the Governor's veto message he commented the legislation would put more pressure on the General Fund which already is under significant pressure.

The Senate Transportation Committee and the House Transportation Committee held a joint committee meeting this week in Ann Arbor at Mcity, a test track for "connected autonomous vehicles" (CAVs) on University of Michigan's north campus. Senate Transportation Committee Chair Senator Tom Casperson, R-Escanaba commented "It's almost mind blowing how fast researchers are making progress at building driverless cars. I think it's coming in the next five to ten years. We are going to see some of this rolling down the highways. I've already experienced the Tesla out in California on the highways. I drove the vehicle and really let it go, so they are doing it. I actually felt more comfortable with the vehicle because it could sense the road better than I could and it was very smooth in its reaction to traffic."

Rep. Triston Cole, R-Mancelona, House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee commented "Honestly, I think we are there. We've got driver assist. We've got sensors on our cars as far back as the 2013 and 2014 model years. We have got some of this technology already, so we are already seeing this on the road. People would be amazed as how much information is being monitored and gathered with the new vehicles out there. When you've got parallel park assist. When you have some vehicles that help back up a trailer. We've got automatic braking. It's already here."

Representatives of government, academia, conservationists, utilities and tree care firm have formed a coalition to increase awareness about the threat oak wilt disease poses in the state, the DNR announced this week. Oak wilt, a fungal disease, is spreading in Michigan and other states with confirmed positive reports in 47 counties. Concentrations are especially high in a triangle-sized area running roughly from Traverse City to Clare to Alpena. The shoreline area of Ottawa County and the area near the Livingston-Washington county line also have strong concentrations. The disease is fatal to many oak species, the DNR said, including red oaks, pin oaks and black oaks. The disease can spread via insects that land on fresh tree wounds or through root systems. The DNR commented that disease awareness, proper identification and timely response can prevent the disease and help manage it. The coalition will house information at www.michiganoakwilt.org

Work will continue on September 6 when the Legislature returns to defeat or amend HB 4438, legislation to allow farmers to provide and move porta johns from filed to field for migrant workers.