



Legislative Report

WITH JUST THREE WEEKS remaining at press time for the 2009 spring legislative session, a number of major questions remain to be answered. How will the General Assembly decide to wipe out a \$12 billion deficit in the state budget? Will lawmakers OK an increase in the state income tax? Will there be funding for a road and capital program? Will local government be included? What kind of ethics reforms can pass?

That's a hefty agenda if the legislature hopes to adjourn by its May 31 deadline.

Gov. Pat Quinn has proposed raising the income tax by 50 percent, from 3 to 4.5 percent to balance the state budget and help fund a capital bill. He has also suggested raising various fees, including drivers' licenses and license plate fees. He has been cool to the idea of raising the state's gasoline tax, even though the idea has some support in the General Assembly.

With just 18 days of session on the schedule, those questions will soon be answered.

A look at TOI's 2009 legislative lineup and the current status:

HOUSE BILL 621 (*Rep. Mike Fortner/Sen. Randy Hultgren*) expands the authority of a township board to include cutting tall grass, trimming trees and bushes, and removing nuisance bushes and trees when the owners of real estate neglect to perform these duties. It

also allows for recovery of costs associated with performing those tasks. ***Passed the House, passage stage in Senate.***

HOUSE BILL 644 (*Rep. Pat Verschoore/Sen. Michael Bond*) allows discontinuing water service, sewerage service, or both, if payments for sewerage service have become delinquent. ***Passed the House, held by Senate sponsor in Senate Local Government Committee, filed as an amendment to HB 621.***

SENATE BILL 1379 (*Sen. John Sullivan/Rep. Jil Tracy*) increases the threshold for a township highway commissioner to have a pecuniary interest in lease contracts if the aggregate total is less than \$2,000 (now \$1,000). ***Passed the Senate, passage stage in House.***

HOUSE BILL 564 (*Rep. JoAnn Osmond/Sen. Pam Althoff*) provides that the city council of any coterminous city may authorize the township supervisor to preside over portions of city council meetings when the city council is exercising powers that would ordinarily be exercised by the township board. ***Passed the House, passage stage in Senate.***

HOUSE BILL 476/SENATE BILL 1491 (*Rep. Dave Winters/Sen. Lou Viverito*) changes the way that Motor Fuel Tax funds are distributed to those townships that don't levy the maximum amount allowed in their road and bridge fund. ***HB 476 passed the House, held in Senate Transportation Committee; SB 1491 held in Senate Transportation Committee.***

SENATE BILL 1254 (*Sen. Pam Althoff/Rep. Dan Burke*) exempts outdoor physical fitness establishments operated by municipalities or townships from the requirement to have a defibrillator on hand, as well as personnel trained to use one. ***Passed the Senate, bill's contents gutted in House committee.***



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