Legislative Report

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The Good, the Bad, the Unexpected

THE DEADLINE FOR BILL INTRODUCTION has come and gone. As the flurry of new legislation calms we can take a deep breath and look at the new proposals and the impact many of them will have on townships. It should come as no surprise that yet again a number of anti-township pieces of legislation were introduced. TOI is already hard at work, talking to legislators and staff to defend against such bills but the job has just begun. However, the outlook is not all bad as there were a number of bills introduced this spring which would be good for townships. This includes the legislative initiatives put forth by TOI in order to be proactive in protecting Townships and to take the lead, instead of being on defense, on issues like transparency and accountability. Below is a snap shot of the bills we will be facing this year.

The Good:

SB 2593 *(Sen. Chapin Rose)* is the trailer bill to SB 3 and HB 607, proposed by TOI, that adds transparency for voters by ensuring they have the information they need to make an informed decision. This is done by requiring a study be completed before a referendum could proceed to abolish a road district to prove that such an abolishment would result in savings to tax payers and avoid instances where it could actually cost them more. A similar bill was also introduced in the House (HB 4190) by Rep. Steve Reick, who has been a vocal advocate for this issue. TOI strongly supports both measures.

SB 2923 *(Sen. James Clayborne)* is a TOI membership legislative proposal and again address transparency and accountability by requiring the township clerk to attest payouts made by the township supervisor. Requiring two elected officials to verify a payout is best practices and reduces the potential risk of misuses of public funds. It also allows a chance for TOI to lead the conversation on good government issues instead of merely responding.

Also introduced

HB 4252 *(Rep. Thomas Bennett)* would allow that in provisions restricting township funds from exceeding an amount equal to or greater than 2.5 times the annual average expenditure of the previous 3 fiscal years, the township's general assistance fund would be exempt from such restrictions.

The Bad:

As always, townships remain under fire from the General Assembly and the below is a sample of bills that continue that trend.

HB 4244 *(Rep. McSweeney)* seeks to create a new and separate process to abolish townships but only in McHenry County. The process it would create would be extremely easy to initiate and have none of the safe guards, protections, or accountability that other townships residents outside of McHenry County would have should residents wish to proceed on such a referendum question.

HB 4375 *(Rep. Peter Breen)* would mandate that all emails that are in connection with the transaction of public business sent or received by a unit of local government are considered public records regardless if the emails are sent or received on a personal or unit-provided or district-provided email address.

The Unexpected:

Property taxes remain a sensitive topic for many voters in Illinois and it was expected that, similar to last year, we would see a host of property tax freeze bills introduced by the General Assembly especially considering it is an election year. While numerous bills increasing property tax exemptions have been filed, there has yet to be a property tax freeze bill introduced this session. That isn't to say that at some point there won't be an amendment filed to create a property tax freeze before this year is over. Yet it is still a surprise that nothing was introduced this spring especially considering the property tax freeze proposal that the House was able to pass during the fall veto session of 2017. Also this topic was noticeably absent from the Governor's State of the Budget Address where in years past he has made it a point to recommend passages of such freeze proposals.