



## **UPDATES FROM THE CAPITOL**

### **March 6-24, 2023**

#### **GOVERNOR SIGNS ELCRA EXPANSION**

On Thursday, March 16, Governor Gretchen Whitmer signed new LGBTQ+ protections into law under the state's Elliot-Larsen Civil Rights Act.

Over a decade in the making, the state has now added sexual orientation and gender identity and expression as protected classes against discrimination in housing, employment, and public accommodations.

A small number of Republican senators and representatives voted in support of the legislation. Those opposed to the bill shared their no-vote explanation, stating it could infringe on religious rights and freedoms. Public Act 6 of 2023 can be found [here](#).

#### **LEGISLATURE MOVES RIGHT TO WORK, PREVAILING WAGE**

The legislature continued with its busy policy schedule prior to spring break by moving a number of high-profile bills, including the repeal of the current state right to work law and restoring the prevailing wage for public construction projects in Michigan.

The House of Representatives passed their version of bills with the Senate quickly moving them from committee to the full Senate floor on March 14. Both chambers passed SB 34, SB 6, HB 4004, and HB 4005 along party lines. With the passage of these bills, the state moves one step closer to reversing laws that have been in place since 2012 and 2018.

Late changes were made to both HB 4004 and HB 4005, which now include a \$1 million appropriation substitution for the Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity to use for educational outreach. The Right to Work bills are now referendum-proof, a practice that has not previously been supported by Governor Whitmer under a Republican-led legislature. However, Governor Whitmer has stated that she intends on signing the legislation.

#### **HOUSE, SENATE GUN REFORM BILLS PASS OUT OF CHAMBERS**

The Michigan House and Senate took further action on gun reform legislation by taking steps to finalize a package of bills containing legislation from both chambers. Senate Bills 79, 80, 81, and 82, along with House Bills 4138 and 4142 will head to the desk of Governor Gretchen Whitmer. House Bill 4143 will need a concurrence vote in the House prior to presentation to the Governor.

The package of bills would require background checks to be performed on all gun purchases, require individuals to obtain a license to own a firearm, enact red flag laws that would allow family, friends, or others to petition the court to remove firearms from those who may harm themselves or others, and require gun owners to safely store their firearms.

In separate but related news, President Biden issued an Executive Order this week seeking to reinforce background checks for gun buyers, strengthen red flag laws, encourage safe storage of firearms, and ask the Federal Trade Commission to analyze how gun manufacturers market firearms.

### **WHITMER SIGNS LOWERING MI COSTS PLAN**

On March 8, Governor Whitmer signed a \$1.3 billion supplemental appropriations bill that funds economic development incentives for Ford to build a new electric vehicle battery plant in Marshall, recruitment and retention dollars for healthcare workers, and funding for community violence intervention grants. Specifically, the following were included:

\$630 million for Ford Motor Company's new EV battery plant to be built in Marshall, MI  
\$75 million to support health care recruitment and retention programs  
\$67 million to support long term care workforce recruitment and retention programs  
\$63.5 million to increase long term care reimbursement rates  
\$10.8 million to establish an office of community violence intervention services  
\$60 million for a competitive grant program to provide grants to community centers  
\$170 million to deposit in the state's Strategic Outreach and Attraction Reserve Fund (SOAR)  
\$25 million to deposit in the Water Shutoff Prevention Fund  
\$212 for energy efficiency updates completed by homeowners/landlords

### **AG JOINS COALITION SUPPORTING ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE**

Michigan Attorney General Dana Nessel announced that she has joined a coalition of 22 states to support a proposed federal rule that protects access to healthcare. The proposed rule seeks to rescind portions of a 2019 rule that allows individuals or entities to deny healthcare on religious or moral grounds.

In the coalition's comment letter, 22 attorneys general from across the country expressed their support, arguing:

- It protects vulnerable populations, including LGBTQ communities and people seeking reproductive care, by revoking parts of the 2019 Rule that opened them up to discrimination and threatened to exacerbate already existing inequities in healthcare
- It strikes a better balance between safeguarding conscience rights of individual medical providers and protecting access to healthcare for patients
- It corrects portions of the 2019 Rule that are redundant, confusing, or have been deemed illegal by courts in litigation brought by the states, as well as local governments and healthcare providers

It protects billions of dollars in federal funding for states' public healthcare and other federally funded programs that provide crucial health, education, and labor services

### **FISCAL AGENCIES ISSUE FEBRUARY REVENUE REPORTS**

The Senate and House Fiscal Agencies reported state collections for February 2023. While the agencies found lower collections in February 2023 compared to 2022, the General Fund/General Purpose (GF/GP) revenues are above projections established at the January 2023 Consensus Revenue Estimating Conference (CREC).

According to the [House Fiscal Agency](#), GF/GP collections for February 2023 totaled approximately \$1.6 billion, which is \$117 million less than February 2022. However, this total is \$24.7 million above projections from January's CREC. The School Aid Fund sits \$23.3 million above January projections.

The [Senate report](#) showed GF collections were \$99 million below SFA consensus revenue estimates while School Aid Fund collections were \$6.2 million above consensus estimates.

### **GENESEE COUNTY CIRCUIT COURT APPROVES FLINT WATER CIVIL SETTLEMENT**

Following the 2014 Flint Water Crisis, Genesee County Circuit Court Judge David J. Newblatt approved the final Flint water civil settlement on March 21.

The settlement is the biggest civil settlement in Michigan history, totaling approximately \$626 million in financial compensation for Michigan's families, property owners, and businesses who were affected by the Flint water. Out of the \$626 million, the state of Michigan will pay \$600 million, the City of Flint will pay \$20 million, McLaren Regional Medical Center will pay \$5 million, and Rowe Professional Services Co. will pay \$1.25 million

As children are particularly vulnerable to the effects of lead contamination, a majority of the settlement will be allocated towards those who were minors when first exposed to the contaminated water. During the water crisis nearly a decade ago, most of the claims of minors were from children aged six and younger. Some of the settlement is also to be allocated towards Genesee County special education services and those who experienced property and business damages.