

Office of Legislative Research
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Municipalities



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Kevin E. McCarthy, Principal Analyst

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NOTICE TO READERS

This report provides highlights of new laws (public acts) affecting municipalities and municipal employees enacted during the 2008 regular and special legislative sessions. In each summary we indicate the public act (PA) number. The report does not cover special acts, some of which affect municipalities, and public acts that only affect a single municipality.

Not all provisions of the acts are included here. Complete summaries of all 2008 public acts passed will be available in the fall when OLR's *Public Act Summary* book is published; some are already on OLR's webpage: <http://www.cga.state.ct.us/olr/publicactsummaries.asp>.

Readers are encouraged to obtain the full text of acts that interest them from the Connecticut State Library, the House Clerk's Office, or the General Assembly's website: <http://www.cga.state.ct.us/default.asp>.

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ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Tax Increment Bond Authorization Extended

The legislature extended, from July 1, 2008 to July 1, 2010, the Connecticut Development Authority's authorization to issue tax incremental financing bonds for municipally-sponsored brownfield projects. The bonds are backed with the new property tax revenues the completed projects generate.

(PA 08-162, effective upon passage)

EDUCATION

Education Funding

Among other things, this act:

1. reduces funding to municipalities in the second year of the phase-in for full funding for Educational Cost Sharing (ECS) grants;
2. reduces the total funding for a supplemental priority school district grant to all priority districts for FY 09 by \$290,778;
3. eliminates the existing formula for distributing priority school district school readiness grants and substitutes a temporary distribution formula for FY 09 that is based on each district's school readiness program capacity;

4. increases the maximum per-child cost of the state Department of Education's school readiness program for FY 09 to \$8,346;
5. expands the entities that may establish and operate interdistrict magnet schools and receive state grants for doing so in order to help the state to meet the goals of the 2008 Sheff settlement;
6. makes several changes in grants for summer school educational programs offered to students attending interdistrict magnet school programs;
7. limits the law requiring districts not participating in an interdistrict magnet school to pay for students to attend that school;
8. starting with FY 10, raises the minimum proportion of any annual increase in its ECS grant that a town must allocate to education spending in order to meet its minimum budget requirement; and
9. extends temporary certification requirements for bilingual education teachers for an additional year.

(PA 08-170, various effective dates)

School Construction

This act:

1. authorizes \$345.37 million in state grant commitments for 29 new school construction projects of various types, and reauthorizes 18 previously authorized projects that have changed substantially (more than 10%) in cost or scope;
2. requires school districts to submit school project change orders and other change directives issued after July 1, 2008 to the State Department of Education (SDE) within six months after issuance and excludes any change order not submitted within six months and in a manner the education commissioner prescribes from the project costs eligible for a school construction grant;
3. requires that title to a school construction project, for which the state has paid 95%, rather than 100%, of the project's eligible cost revert to the state if the building's use is changed within 20 years from the date the General Assembly approves the state grant;
4. establishes a separate process by which local school districts must award contracts for architectural or

construction management services on school construction projects receiving state school construction grants; and

5. establishes an alternative procedure for a qualifying regional school district that does not include all K-12 grades to add or withdraw grades from the regional district.

(**PA 08-169**, effective July 1, 2008 for the reversion and architectural and construction management services provisions and upon passage for the other provisions.)

Health Insurance for Retired Teachers

This act increases the monthly health insurance subsidy under the Teachers' Retirement System for retired teachers meeting certain criteria from \$110 to \$220 per person.

(**PA 08-112**, effective July 1, 2008)

Teacher Education

This act:

1. eliminates the Beginning Educator Support and Training (BEST) Program as of July 1, 2009;
2. eliminates the video component from the BEST assessment for new teachers for the 2008-09 school year; and

3. establishes a 21-member task force to develop a new mentor assistance program to replace the BEST program starting in the 2009-2010 school year and recommend transition procedures between the old and new programs.

The BEST Program is a two-year induction program of support and assessment for new teachers. Satisfactory completion of the program is required for beginning classroom teachers employed in public schools and approved private special education facilities.

(PA 08-107, the BEST Program repeal takes effect July 1, 2009; the elimination of the video component of the BEST assessment takes effect July 1, 2008; and the task force takes effect upon passage.)

Education of Children of Service Members

This act (1) enacts and commits Connecticut to the terms of the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children and (2) creates an Interstate Commission on Educational Opportunity for Military Children to administer and enforce the compact.

The compact provides a legal mechanism, and creates uniform standards, for schools and local education agencies to use to facilitate placement, enrollment, graduation, data collection, and other decisions involving children

in kindergarten through grade 12 when they move to other states because their parents are deployed on active duty in the U.S. Armed Services.

(PA 07-57, these provisions effective upon passage.)

PTAs and Bingo

The act exempts PTAs and PTOs from the provisions governing other organizations authorized to sponsor or conduct bingo. It, instead, creates a separate, less stringent and complex oversight process for PTAs and PTOs. This process is almost identical to that for recreational bingo for senior citizens.

(PA 07-62, effective upon passage.)

ENVIRONMENT

Wetlands

This act restores a requirement that zoning commissions and planning commissions, respectively, “give due consideration” to inland wetlands agency reports when reviewing, for a regulated wetlands area, (1) a site plan to help determine the conformity of a proposed building, use, or structure with specific zoning regulations and (2) applications and plans for subdivisions and re-subdivisions. PA 07-102 required that these commissions instead “consider” these reports.

(**PA 08-38**, effective upon passage)

Electronic Device Recycling

By law, television and computer manufacturers must participate in a program to implement and finance the collection, transportation, and recycling of their discarded products, known as covered electronic devices (CEDs). This act delays, from January 1, 2009 to July 1, 2009, the implementation date for various aspects of this mandate, including when (1) each municipality must provide for recycling of these products and (2) each covered electronics recycler must cooperate with municipalities or regional authorities to provide for the collection and transportation of CEDs and meet certain other requirements.

(**PA 08-35**, effective upon passage)

Open Space and Water-Shed Grants

This act allows municipalities and other applicants of the open space and watershed grant program to use other state and federal funds as matching grants covering up to 70% of their projects. The program provides grants to (1) municipalities and nonprofit land organizations to acquire land or permanent interests (e.g., easements) in it, (2) water companies (including

municipal utilities) to acquire land that protects drinking water supplies, and (3) distressed municipalities and targeted investment communities to restore or protect open space land they already own. If the state acquires a partial interest in a property, an easement must provide (1) permanent preservation, (2) public access, and (3) any Department of Public Health restrictions necessary to protect a public drinking water source.

(**PA 08-124**, effective upon passage)

Solid Waste Facility

This act bars the Department of Environmental Protection commissioner from permitting the construction or operation of a solid waste facility on land whose boundary is within 150 feet of property where there is a housing development owned by a housing authority, unless the commissioner determines the proposed facility does not pose a threat to (1) the environment of the surrounding geographic area or (2) public safety. It exempts from this prohibition (1) permits to build or operate a solid waste facility issued on or before September 30, 2008 and (2) the renewal of such a permit. Under the act, a solid waste facility is a solid waste disposal area, volume reduction plant, transfer station, wood-burning facility, or biomedical waste treatment

facility. It apparently also includes redemption centers.

(**PA 08-173**, this provision effective October 1, 2008)

HOUSING

Payments In Lieu of Taxes (PILOTs)

The legislature eliminated the 40-year limit on PILOTs for privately-owned low- and moderate-income rental housing and allowed those for publicly-owned low- and moderate-income rental housing to continue after a housing authority transfers its to a private entity with state approval.

(**PA 08-10**, effective July 1, 2008)

Supportive Housing

A new law authorizes an additional 500 “Next Steps” supportive housing units mainly for people with mental illness with Connecticut Housing Finance Authority and Department of Economic and Community Development funds.

(**PA 08-123**, upon passage)

HUMAN SERVICES

General Assistance Program

This act prohibits municipalities from claiming or applying a lien against any money received as a settlement or award in a public accommodation discrimination case by their residents who had

received funding under the town-administered General Assistance program. The state took over that program in 1997, but towns can still recover benefits paid in certain circumstances.

(**PA 08-45**, effective October 1, 2008)

BESB

This act authorizes up to 5% of the Board of Education and Services to the Blind's (BESB) Educational Aid for the Blind and Visually Handicapped account appropriation to be used to employ “special assistants to the blind” and other support staff needed to ensure services are delivered efficiently.

(**PA 08-133**, effective July 1, 2008)

Small House Nursing Homes

This act directs the Department of Social Services (DSS) commissioner to establish a pilot program, within existing resources, to help develop up to 10 small house nursing homes in the state. The homes must improve the quality of life for nursing home residents and provide nursing home care in home-like, rather than institutionalized, settings. The commissioner, in consultation with the Long-Term Care Planning Committee, must approve up to 10 proposals, of which two must be for developing a small house nursing home in a distressed municipality.

(PA 08-91, effective July 1, 2008)

LAND USE

This act requires the Office of Policy and Management (OPM) secretary to (1) rank the state's policies for developing and conserving land and (2) track the extent to which the state's principles for managing growth are being implemented. These policies and principles are specified in the State Plan of Conservation and Development (Plan of C&D), which serves as the basis for state agencies deciding whether to fund major physical development projects.

The act also requires the secretary to reassess the boundaries of the state's planning regions at least once every 20 years and change them if necessary. The law allows towns within these regions to form three types of regional planning bodies. The rules governing these bodies vary. The act gives them largely the same powers and duties and refers to them collectively as regional planning organizations (RPOs). It also makes many conforming technical changes regarding RPOs.

By law, most RPOs must prepare a 10-year regional plan of development. These plans do not have to be consistent with the state plan, but the law requires the secretary to review them to determine if they are not inconsistent with the state plan.

The act requires the secretary to develop uniform criteria for reviewing regional plans of development.

Lastly, the act expands the range of projects eligible for regional performance incentive grants, which are currently available for delivering an existing municipal service on a regional basis. The act extends eligibility to new services that are not being provided anywhere in the region. It also drops the requirement that proposed projects increase local purchasing power or lower tax rates but requires the secretary to give priority to those that do.

(PA 08-182, effective October 1, 2008 except for the changes affecting the regional performance incentive grants, which take effect July 1, 2008)

MUNICIPAL UTILITIES

Municipal Water Liens

This act extends, from one to two years, the time that a lien for delinquent municipal water rates and charges runs before it must be continued by filing a certificate with the town clerk in the same way as a tax lien.

(PA 08-43, effective October 1, 2008)

Municipal Electric Energy Cooperatives

This act expands the powers of a municipal electric energy cooperative. It also gives a

cooperative more options in procuring supplies, materials, and equipment. The Connecticut Municipal Electric Energy Cooperative is currently the only such cooperative in Connecticut.

(PA 08-128, effective upon passage)

MISCELLANEOUS

Brownfields, Property Tax Exemption on Open Space

This act divides the generic, multipurpose brownfield clean-up and redevelopment program into separate grant and loan programs targeting different eligible developers. The grant program is open to municipalities, local and regional development authorities, and nonprofit developers. The loan program is open to these entities and for-profit developers. The act specifies maximum grant and loan amounts, eligibility criteria, and loan terms and conditions, which include investigating and remediating the property. The act retains most of the existing program's eligibility criteria and application procedures.

The act expands the circumstances under which a municipality can enter and investigate or assess contaminated property, specifies the extent to which it is immune from liability when it does so, requires the municipality to notify the owner before entering the property, and sets narrow grounds under which the owner

can appeal the municipality's intention to do so.

The act exempts land from local property taxes if it is held by a nonprofit corporation and preserved as open space.

It authorizes the agriculture commissioner to establish a program for preserving farmland that is not eligible for the Farmland Preservation Grant Program, which allows him to purchase up to 100% of development rights or purchase such rights jointly with a municipality.

(PA 08-174, effective upon passage, with the exemption for open space land applying to assessment years starting on or after October 1, 2007)

Municipal Purchasing

This act allows contracting agencies (including municipalities and school districts) to use a reverse auction to award contracts for goods or supplies if doing so would be advantageous to the agencies and ensure a competitive contract award. ("Reverse auction" means an on-line bidding process in which qualified bidders and proposers anonymously submit bids or proposals to provide goods or supplies pursuant to an invitation to bid or request for proposals.)

(PA 08-141, effective upon passage)

Agricultural Viability Grants

This act makes the following entities eligible for the agricultural viability matching grant: groups of municipalities; regional planning agencies, councils of governments, and councils of elected officials; and other groups of municipalities with a regional inter-local agreement. (Individual municipalities were already eligible.) The grants can be used for (1) local capital projects fostering agricultural viability, including farmers markets and processing facilities, and (2) developing and implementing agriculturally friendly land use regulations and local farmland protection strategies.

(PA 08-13, effective upon passage)

SSNS

Federal law makes confidential any Social Security numbers (SSNs) and related records obtained under any law enacted on or after October 1, 1990 and prohibits state or local officials from disclosing them. This act tightens access to SSNs on birth and fetal death certificates recorded before that date and on marriage and death certificates recorded before July 1, 1997 when state law first required recording them.

The act also (1) requires registrars of vital statistics to record this information in the confidential portion of the

certificates instead of the “information for statistical purposes only” section, (2) extends several marriage license laws to civil union licenses and limits access to SSNs on both marriage and civil union licenses, and (3) limits those who can get a certified copy of certain death certificates containing an SSN.

(PA 08-66, effective October 1, 2008)

Public Safety

By law, any paid or volunteer firefighter, police officer, or emergency medical services (EMS) personnel successfully completing a training course in the use of automatic pre-filled cartridge injectors containing nerve agent antidote medications can carry and use them for self or unit preservation in the event of nerve agent exposure. This act allows EMS personnel to use them for treating the general public in an emergency response.

This act also adds certified operators of water treatment plants or water distribution systems to this list of professionals licensed, certified, or registered in another state who can work in Connecticut during a declared public health emergency. They can work only within the scope of their practice as permitted by Connecticut law. The law allows the DPH commissioner to suspend, for up to 60 consecutive days, state licensing, certification, or

registration requirements that apply to these professionals.
(PA 08-134, effective 1, 2008)

TAXATION

Conveyance Tax

This act extends the expiration date of the basic 0.25% municipal real estate conveyance tax rate for two years, until July 1, 2010. This extension also maintains the maximum 0.5% municipal option rate allowable in 18 eligible towns for the same period.

(SB 1001, effective upon passage)

Telecommunications Companies

By law, telecommunications companies subject to the statewide personal property tax must annually file a list of their taxable personal property with the Department of Revenue Services (DRS) and the Office of Policy and Management (OPM). This act requires them to (1) list the property on a town-by-town basis and (2) submit to each relevant municipality a list of their personal property located in or allocated to the municipality.

By law, DRS and OPM can audit the companies' submissions. The act allows any municipality to examine these audits.

By law, telecommunications companies and other businesses must file annual personal

property declarations. By law, the failure to file a declaration by November 1 (or the deadline set by the assessor if an extension is granted) is subject to a penalty of 25% of the assessment of the property on the list. The act specifies that a declaration postmarked by the filing deadline is not delinquent and thus not subject to the penalty.

(PA 08-130, effective upon passage and applicable to declarations due on or after November 1, 2008 for the penalty provision; July 1, 2008 for the telecommunications companies provisions.)

Antique Vehicles

This act eliminates the requirement that an antique, rare, or special interest motor vehicle be registered in order for it its assessment to be capped at \$500 for property tax purposes. By law, an antique, rare or special-interest motor vehicle is defined as any motor vehicle that is 20 years old or older which has been preserved because of historic interest and which is not altered or modified from the original manufacturer's specifications.

(PA 08-150, this provision effective October 1, 2008)

Vehicles Owned by Service Members

This act allows more U. S. Armed Forces members to qualify for an existing motor vehicle local

property tax exemption. Under prior law, the exemption applied to one motor vehicle owned or leased by, or held in trust for, a member and garaged out-of-state. The act extends the exemption to vehicles garaged in-state as well. By law, a member must apply for the exemption in writing by December 31 following the due date of the property tax.

(**PA 08-121**, this provision effective July 1, 2008)

PUBLIC EMPLOYEES

Ethics

This act:

1. generally permits state courts to revoke or reduce any retirement or other benefit due to state or municipal officials or employees who commit certain crimes related to their employment;
2. makes it a class A misdemeanor for public servants to fail to report a bribe; and
3. requires public agencies to post, on available web sites, meeting dates, times, and minutes required by law to be publicly disclosed.

(**HB 6502**, effective October 1, 2008)

Construction Safety at Public Works Projects

Under prior law, all employees performing manual labor on state

or municipal building construction or repair contracts of \$100,000 or more had to prove they have completed a 10-hour construction safety and health course that meets federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) Training Institute standards. This act makes several changes to this law that affect contracts entered into on or after July 1, 2009. The act expands the training requirement to any public works project, which includes sewage and water treatment plants, site work, road and bridge work, parking lots, drainage systems, and other public projects. Instead of applying the training requirement to all projects of \$100,000 or more, the act applies the existing prevailing wage project thresholds to the training requirement. This means the requirement kicks in for (1) repair and renovation projects of \$100,000 or more and (2) new construction projects of \$400,000 or more.

(**PA 08-83**, effective January 1, 2009)

Health Care Insurance

This act allows municipalities, certain municipal service contractors, nonprofit organizations, and small businesses to join the state employee health insurance plan for their employees and retirees. Under it, all new employees will be pooled together with state

employees in the state insurance plan.

It requires the comptroller to provide insurance coverage for these employers when they apply to cover all their employees or all of their retirees. When an employer applies to cover some employees or some retirees, she must deny coverage if the Health Care Cost Containment Committee certifies to her that the application would shift a significantly disproportionate part of the employer's medical risks to the state plan.

The act requires that premiums the municipal and other employers pay be the same as those the state pays for the same insurance plans. It allows employers to require an employee contribution toward the premium. It also permits the comptroller to charge participating employers an administrative fee based on a per member, per month basis.

Under the act, employers joining must commit to participate in the state plan for three years, at the end of which they may renew for another three years. The comptroller must develop procedures for employers to withdraw from coverage and for employers with public employee collective bargaining, the procedures must comply with state collective bargaining law.

The act specifies that it allows the comptroller to procure coverage for nonstate employees from insurance vendors other than those providing coverage for

state employees. The act also specifies the comptroller is not required to offer coverage from each vendor now participating in the state plan.

If an employer fails to make premium payments, the state can charge interest at the prevailing rate. In the case of a municipality, it can also withhold grants or other assistance to the town until the premiums are paid.

The act requires the State Employees' Bargaining Agent Coalition (SEBAC) to consent to adding new employees to the state plan before the plan can be opened up. SEBAC is the bargaining coalition that negotiates state employee health and retirement benefits for all state unions.

The act also establishes a Nonstate Public Health Care Advisory Committee with representatives of municipalities and municipal unions to make recommendations concerning municipal coverage to the Health Care Cost Containment Committee, created through the SEBAC agreement.

The act permits two or more municipalities to join together as a single entity to obtain health insurance for their employees. It requires the group to be fully insured and meet existing health insurance requirements.

(PA 08-183, effective September 1, 2008, except the definitions, the provision creating the advisory committees, and the SEBAC approval are effective

upon passage; and the report and the authority for two or more municipalities to join together to purchase health insurance are effective January 1, 2009; vetoed)

Health Benefits Expand

This act expands the benefits payable under a group health insurance policy for treatment received in a residential treatment facility by eliminating a three-day hospital stay prerequisite for children and adolescents and extending the benefit to adults.

It replaces “serious mental illness” with “serious mental or nervous condition” and removes from the term’s definition that the person demonstrated it through recent disturbed behavior. It requires benefits be paid when a physician, psychiatrist, psychologist, or clinical social worker assesses the person and determines that he or she cannot appropriately, safely, or effectively be treated in other specified settings. (Due to federal law, state benefit mandates do not apply to self-insured plans.)

(PA 08-125, effective January 1, 2009)

Another act requires health insurance policies delivered, issued, renewed, amended, or continued in Connecticut on or after January 1, 2009 to cover physical, speech, and occupational therapy services provided to treat autism

spectrum disorders if the policies cover these services for other diseases and conditions. It applies this requirement to group and individual (1) health insurance policies that cover basic hospital, medical-surgical, or major medical expenses; (2) HMO contracts covering hospital and medical expenses; and (3) hospital or medical service contracts. Due to federal law, this requirement does not apply to self-insured plans.

(PA 08-132, effective January 1, 2009)

Workers Compensation for Police Officers and Firefighters

This act establishes a rebuttable presumption under workers’ compensation law for municipal firefighters, police, and constables hired after July 1, 1996 who suffer a cardiac emergency while on duty after July 1, 2009.

To be covered by the act, the cardiac emergency must result in lost work time due to total or partial incapacity or death. The presumption that the ailment is due to the occupation is rebuttable, meaning it is presumed to be job-related unless a preponderance of evidence shows it is not. Under current law, such an ailment is compensable, but the burden of proof is on the employee to demonstrate it is job-related.

(PA 08-61, effective July 1, 2009)

PUBLIC HEALTH

This act gives a municipality the power to regulate, on any property it owns, any activity deemed to be deleterious to public health, including the lighting or carrying of a lighted cigarette, cigar, pipe, or similar device.

The act limits the requirement that school-based health clinics (SBHC) that are located in or attached to school buildings must have an entrance separate from the school's entrance. Under prior law, the requirement applied to SBHCs constructed on or after October 1, 2007. The act limits the requirement to SBHCs built on or after July 1, 2009 where the SBHC shares a first floor exterior wall with the school building.

The law permits a licensed or certified volunteer municipal ambulance service that is a primary service area provider to add one emergency vehicle every three years without having to go through a public hearing that is otherwise required. The one vehicle limit applies to the provider's entire fleet regardless of the number of towns it serves. The act allows hospital-based ambulance services to add a vehicle under this process.

The act revises one of the licensing requirements for any assembly of 3,000 or more people that is expected to last 18 or more consecutive hours. It requires a license applicant to show proof that he or she will

furnish a written plan that has been reviewed by the primary services area responder for the town in which the event is to be held that indicates satisfactory planning and arrangements for an ambulance service to be on the site for the event's duration. Under current law, the applicant must show proof that he or she will provide (1) at least one doctor for every 1,000 people and one nurse for every 1,500 anticipated attendees, (2) an enclosed structure for treatments, and (3) at least one ambulance available at all times.

(PA 08-184, various effective dates)

PUBLIC SAFETY

Motor Vehicle Accidents

This act requires that for every motor vehicle accident in which any person is killed, the police officer, agency, or individual who, in the regular course of duty, investigates it must use reasonable efforts to identify and notify a member of the person's family or household of the fatality as soon as practicable after the accident. It specifies what the notification must include. It requires the Police Officer Standards and Training Post Council and each police department, agency, or individual responsible for investigating motor vehicle accidents to adopt a policy for doing so.

(**PA 08-67**, this provision effective October 1, 2008)

Volunteer Firefighters

This act allows municipalities with paid emergency personnel and municipalities with volunteer emergency personnel to enter into agreements authorizing paid personnel to serve during personal time as active members of a volunteer fire department in the municipality where they live. In developing the agreements, municipalities must consider the model guidelines, which the state fire administrator must develop under existing law. The act allows municipalities to ask the labor commissioner to help resolve any issues arising from the agreements. He must do this within available appropriations and as he deems appropriate.

The act prohibits municipalities from entering into any contract prohibiting paid firefighters or paid emergency personnel from serving as active members of a volunteer fire department, during personal time, in the municipality where they live.

(**PA 08-131**, effective upon passage)

Fire Safety

With regard to the Fire Prevention Code, this act (1) allows the state fire marshal to issue official code interpretations; (2) establishes a code waiver process; (3) removes the state

Codes and Standards Committee from the appeal process for fire safety and prevention decisions, requiring appeals of local fire marshals' decisions to be made to the state fire marshal and appeals of the state fire marshal's decisions to be made to Superior Court; (4) allows the state fire marshal and local fire marshals to issue orders and citations to building owners and occupants to correct code violations; and (5) establishes a penalty of up to six months in prison, a fine of \$200 to \$1,000, or both, for code violations.

The act expands the authority of police officers and local fire officials to order people to vacate buildings for safety reasons and establishes state oversight of such orders when an unsafe building condition cannot be corrected in four hours or less. It reduces the penalty for certain unsafe building conditions for which the local fire marshal issues corrective orders.

It allows fire code officials to inspect manufacturing establishments, which are currently exempt from the inspection requirements that apply to other buildings.

(**PA 08-65**, effective October 1, 2008)

TOWN CLERKS

This act authorizes town clerks, with respect to documents eligible to be recorded in municipal land records, to:

1. receive, index, store, archive, and transmit electronic documents;
2. provide electronic access to, and search and retrieval of, documents and information;
3. convert paper documents accepted for recording into electronic form;
4. convert into electronic form information recorded before they began to record electronic documents;
5. accept electronically any fee or tax that they are authorized to collect; and
6. agree with federal and other state and local officials on (a) procedures or processes to facilitate the electronic satisfaction of prior conditions on recording and prior approvals by other officials, and (b) the electronic payment of fees and taxes.

The act requires town clerks who exercise the authority the act grants to (1) comply with regulations adopted by the State Librarian under the act and (2) continue to accept paper documents as authorized by state law after beginning to accept electronic documents for recording and place entries for both types of documents in the same index.

(PA 08-56, these provisions effective upon passage)

TRANSPORTATION

Municipal Vehicles

This act exempts municipally owned motor vehicles from DMV motor vehicle title and title-related fees.

(PA 08-150, this provision effective October 1, 2008)

Harbor Improvement Projects

This act authorizes the transportation commissioner to initiate harbor improvement projects on behalf of the state, creates a special account to fund the projects, and removes limits on state grants-in-aid to municipalities for harbor improvement projects.

(PA 08-101, effective upon passage)

School Buses and Leaf Collection Vehicles

This act requires model year 2007 and newer school buses to be equipped with a front bumper-mounted crossing control arm and requires the motor vehicles commissioner to establish additional requirements and standards for these arms by regulation.

The act also exempts from state maximum width and length laws and the prohibition on towing more than two trailers vehicles used by the state or a municipality exclusively for removing leaves or other organic materials from a highway or

road, as long as the operator is properly qualified to operate the combination of vehicles.

(**PA 08-150**, these provisions effective October 1, 2008)

Buses

This act establishes a Department of Transportation program) to provide, within available budgetary resources, new and expanded bus transportation services. DOT must begin accepting applications from publicly-funded transportation providers and nonprofit community transportation service providers on July 1, 2008.

The act also makes up to \$5 million in bonding previously authorized by law for implementing transportation strategy projects and initiatives (i.e., "Tier 1" strategy projects) available for purchasing vehicles for the new program. It does this by replacing the current authorization for use of this funding for clean diesel bus retrofits.

(**PA 08-155**, effective July 1, 2008, except the change in the bonding authorization is effective upon passage)

KM:ts