



Sign in to MLive.com »

Not a member? Register Now »

Site Search

Search Local Business Listings

Search by keyword, town name, Web ID and more...

- Home
- News
- Business
- Sports
- Entertainment
- Living
- Interact
- Jobs
- Autos
- Re
- News
- Education
- Environment
- Lottery
- Newspapers
- Obituaries
- Opinion
- Politics
- Politi

Top Stories



NBA Draft: Pistons take Georgetown's Greg Monroe with...



Obama to press Congress to pass unemployment extension...

Home > Jackson Opinion > Guest Column

Guest column: Michigan Legislature waters down true opportunity for cost-saving reform

Published: Tuesday, June 22, 2010, 11:53 AM



Jackson Citizen Patriot staff
Follow

Share this story

Story tools

By Jeff Jenks

While local units of government struggle with revenue sharing cuts and declining property tax revenue, many in Lansing and around the state talk about "cost-saving reforms."

Unfortunately, there's little actual reform.

One of the best examples is PA 312 of 1969, a law that requires binding arbitration for labor disputes between communities and public safety officers. A key reform would require an arbitrator to consider whether a community has the ability to pay an award, and a clear definition of exactly what ability to pay means.

This year state Sen. Randy Richardville, R-Monroe, generated much excitement when he introduced Senate Bill 1072. In the 41 years since



Jenks

9 0 1 0
 tweet retweet Share

PA 312 was passed, there has been no substantive reform despite decades of decisions that have crippled communities and forced layoffs of many police officers and firefighters.

That excitement quickly turned to disappointment as the bill passed the Senate in a watered-down version that not only fails to help local units of government control costs, but actually expands PA

312 to include public safety authorities, dispatch authorities, and the like. Instead of reforming a law that has been broken for four decades, the Senate just made some tweaks around the edges and expanded it.

Now the House Labor Committee is taking up this bill. It appears this is being fast-tracked, with an "agreement" among labor to get this thing done.

If SB 1072 as currently written passes the House and is sent to the governor, it will be a shame. Once again, the Legislature will have shirked its duty to provide real reform and has taken the easy route instead of protecting our taxpayers.

Make no mistake, passage of this law will mean fewer police and firefighters on the job, as cities will be forced to pay higher wages and benefits to a reduced number of employees in those areas.

The Legislature may claim it passed reforms, but nothing will be farther from the truth. This impotent bill does nothing to benefit taxpayers or lower the cost of government. Next year municipalities will continue to lay off public safety officers.

Michigan has lost more than 2,400 firefighters and 2,000 police officers since 2001, largely because of revenue sharing cuts, declining property values and PA 312. How unsafe do our streets have to become before we start talking about real reform?

— Jeff Jenks is president of the Michigan Municipal League board of directors. He is mayor pro tem of Huntington Woods, in Oakland County.

Sponsored Links

Share
this
story

Story
tools

More stories in Jackson Opinion

Previous story

[Readers' one liners for Tuesday](#)

Next story

[Column: Fatherhood is more than a drop of DNA](#)

9

Comments

[Feed](#)

View: [Oldest first](#) | [Newest first](#)



wrestling076

June 22, 2010 at 2:37PM

[Follow](#)

Again we have an article in the Cit Pat that is one sided- Act 312 allows a third party to decide disputes between Municipal workers who by Law Cannot Strike(Police and Fire) and the Unit of Government. It is not just wage related issues an arbitrator decides to rule upon. **BOTTOM LINE IS - ACT 312 CURRENTLY ALLOWS AN ARBITRATOR TO TAKE INTO ACCOUNT ABILITY TO PAY BY THE MUNICIPALITY...**Jeff Jenks is way off base with this article, again only giving a very

small portion of the issue. I think most people would like a third party, who is neutral, to decide a dispute between parties that disagree. Sick of this Union busting news paper- Michigan is a UNION state, If you want to make a lower wage in any profession, be sure and move to a Right To Work State. READ the LAW -Michigan Workers have the right to join a UNION- In the City of Jackson - Union Workers have made suggestions in the past that would save the City - Each suggestion was turned down by the previous Personnel Director. Quit blaming the Unions for the problems.

[Reply](#) [Post new](#)

Inappropriate? [Alert us.](#)



Smith49203

June 22, 2010 at 3:08PM

[Follow](#)

Notice to all public employee unions in the state of Michigan: The goose that lays the golden eggs isn't yet dead but she is on life support.

[Reply](#) [Post new](#)

Inappropriate? [Alert us.](#)



wrestling076

June 22, 2010 at 3:14PM

[Follow](#)

Smit - You need to educate yourself about Police and Fire Union- you are way off base ASS-uming they have a great deal of power-- I'll tell you right now from 20 yrs in the business of Labor and Law enforcement -- the Unions hold little power

[Reply](#) [Post new](#)

Inappropriate? [Alert us.](#)



Smith49203

June 22, 2010 at 3:38PM

[Follow](#)

What's that ... you say you're a member of a public employee union and you love to spout the party line. Who woulda thunk it? Lemme guess ... SEIU Local 517 M, right?

[Reply](#) [Post new](#)

Inappropriate? [Alert us.](#)



Black Widow

June 22, 2010 at 4:22PM

[Follow](#)

Hey Wrestling - It appears you need to stand down off your high horse and look at the real world, as it is today, not 20 years ago. And, with you working in this field, no wonder you are biased. I don't think there is a city, village or township in Michigan that wants to cheat their public safety employees. And, they certainly don't want to reduce their police and fire workforce, but they have to. Why? Because the unions demand more than these local units of government can afford. The majority of townships in Michigan depend solely on volunteer, on-call fire departments. They don't operate 24/7 like most large municipalities (which all have unions and which all have had to lay-off their workforce), yet they provide good protection to their residents. So what can a third party litigator do? Not much. Sure, they'll look at one's ability to pay the amount, but for how long can this amount be sustained at the rate that revenue sharing is dropping? So yes, unions do hold the power and they do have a large say in arbitration. This legislation would be bad for everybody. At least police and fire union

employees have a job. If unions keep up the way they have been going and are given even more power, there won't be any arbitration necessary because there won't be any employees.

[Reply](#) [Post new](#)

Inappropriate? [Alert us.](#)



wrestling076

June 22, 2010 at 4:44PM

[Follow](#)

Black Widow- Do me a favor and educated yourself about Police and Fire Unions. Google Act 312 and you will see the article was written to make the Unions look bad. The Unions that screwed the Auto workers is the UAW. This change of the law does not give the Police and Fire Unions additional power. This issue is truly about the Michigan Municipal League trying to push through legislation that stop a practice of "Worst Position". This is the League using the law to force Municipal Mergings, without having to respect contracts of the combined parties. I cannot give you a class in contracts- to help you get the point. By the way I am a consertave ,republican supporter who beleives in third party arbitration of fact to solve disputes.

[Reply](#) [Post new](#)

Inappropriate? [Alert us.](#)



dwi/pubs

June 22, 2010 at 10:54PM

[Follow](#)

wrestling076- I've enjoyed reading your post, you seem to be fairly well educated in union policies up to and including arbitration. However, you lost me with your statement " the union that screwed the auto workers was the uaw." I would like you to explain this statement please, the uaw has been screwed over by horrible unfair trade policies , greedy corporations , and attacked by a very high percentage of " your parties " political pressures. As I've stated before on this forum I joined the UAW in 1971 but I've belonged to other unions including municiple unions 4 in all. I do however agree with you 100% about how blackwidow should educate herself in union policies and understand that unions don't get contracts. They have they negotiated with the higher ups of the company involved and then when they come to an agreement that seems to be the best for both sides it's voted on and either accepted or rejected. In many cases the unions have agreed to reopened contracts and after management shows that due to certain situations it has no control over cannot keep up it's end of what it negotiated and the results very likely will result in layoffs or even complete job loses. It's been my experience that the unions usually give into pay and benifit reductions,furlough days,or other concessions, hardly being greedy or unfair. If anything the greedy and unfair individuals are the miserable managements that ask for such actions knowing all along they are moving no matter what the unions give back as this has been done in jackson quite a few times. The end results are always the same, the rightwing nuts scream the greedy unions cost these poor folks their jobs. It's a very sad situation but also a very effective one for the union busters and those screaming for right to work states and lower wages. Don't get me wrong blackwidow I'm not unloading on you, I think your just repeating what a very high percentage of this forum spews on a regular basis.

[Reply](#) [Post new](#)

Inappropriate? [Alert us.](#)



wrestling076

June 23, 2010 at 10:44AM

[Follow](#)

dwi/pubs: UAW did not fairly represent it's skilled trade members- they elected to include Non-skilled trade auto workers into the same contracts. A journeyman who earned his skilled trade card through a long process of apprentice programs, should not be lumped into the same contract as unskilled labor. Education should be rewarded

[Reply](#) [Post new](#)

Inappropriate? [Alert us.](#)



dwi/pubs

June 24, 2010 at 7:22AM

[Follow](#)

Wrestling076- Thank you for your answer, but I think the key word here is " elected " showing that the membership truly runs this union. Education is obtained in many different ways.

[Reply](#) [Post new](#)

Inappropriate? [Alert us.](#)

Post a comment

Sign in to MLive.com

Username

Password

Remember me?

[Submit Query](#)

[I forgot my username or password »](#)

Don't have an account?

[Register now for free](#), or sign in with any of these services:



[AIM](#)

[Google](#)

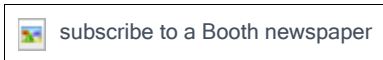
[OpenID](#)

[Site Search](#)

[Search Local Business Listings](#)

Search by keyword, town name, Web ID and more...

[Submit C](#)



[Special home delivery offers!](#)

[Ann Arbor News](#) | [Bay City Times](#) | [Flint Journal](#) | [Grand Rapids Press](#)
[Jackson-Citizen Patriot](#) | [Kalamazoo Gazette](#) | [Muskegon Chronicle](#) | [Saginaw News](#)