

## ***Messages & Talking Points for Common Sense Amendment to Public Act 312 of 1969***

- Michigan lawmakers have pledged — but failed to deliver — substantial government reforms. One of the most obvious reforms the Legislature could accomplish is to pass a common sense amendment to Public Act 312 of 1969. PA 312 is the law regulating contract negotiations with police officers and firefighters.
- Amending PA 312 will not cost the state a dime and will give local units of governments the ability to better control the largest expenses in their budgets — pay and benefits to public safety officers. Even more important, the amendment would keep more police officers and firefighters on the job serving our Michigan citizens.
- We ask the Legislature to pass House Bill **5325**, which would amend PA 312 to allow arbitrators to consider a community's ability to pay when negotiating contracts with police officers and firefighters. Amazingly, as PA 312 is currently written, arbitrators are not allowed to consider whether a community can even afford the police and fire contract proposal that is on the table. This is the same as a family being unable to consider whether they can afford the house or car they are buying ... yet still being forced to buy the house or the car. Common sense tells us that before we can buy something, we need to know if we can afford it.
- PA 312 forces local governments into binding arbitration with police officers and firefighters when they reach a contract impasse. But ... as we have noted ... PA 312 prohibits arbitrators from taking into account a community's ability to pay. It also prohibits arbitrators from looking at the contract's impact on other important community services.
- The result of this law is unrealistically high pay scales for officers and firefighters who keep their jobs. It also forces cities to reduce the number of police officers, firefighters and other programs and services in order to fund the unfair contract that the local government is forced to accept.
- The largest part of any local government budget is labor costs. The biggest labor costs for local governments are police officers and firefighter wages.
- Taxpayers are the obvious losers in all of this because they have to pay more to keep fewer police officers and firefighters on the job. This makes no sense.
- House Bill **5325** reforms PA 312 to allow local elected officials to control local government budgets.

- Michigan currently has 18.6 officers per 10,000 residents, compared to a national average of 22.9 per 10,000 residents, according to research by the Michigan State University Extension State and Local Government Program. Our state has 6.9 firefighters per 10,000 residents, compared to a national average of 10.9 per 10,000. Michigan's public safety professionals have been reduced by 2,000 police officers and 2,400 firefighters since 2000. Amending PA 312 will put more public safety officers back on the streets in our neighborhoods.
- **NOTE:** *Each mayor/labor relations official who speaks should deliver a local example of the failure of PA 312 ... the number of cops/firefighters laid off in the community, other services reduced, political and other threats made to local officials who are trying to change the law. The strength of these examples will help drive support in the Legislature and the quality of the media coverage of the event and the issue moving forward.*