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House Unanimously Approves Open Records / Transparency Bills

Making good on a promise to focus on transparency and accountability in government as a top priority, the Michigan House today voted unanimously to pass bipartisan legislation that provides unprecedented access to records in the Legislature and the Governor's office.

Michigan has among the most restrictive open records laws in the country, creating separation between public servants and the people they represent. Changing the law to require a higher standard of transparency and accountability is a long-time priority for Speaker Jason Wentworth and the Michigan House of Representatives.

"Legislators on both sides of the aisle in the House and Senate see the importance of shining sunlight onto Michigan's records, and I'm confident the time has come to finally get these important laws passed through both chambers and signed by the governor," the Speaker said. "One of our top priorities is to regain the trust of the people of the state and this is a strong start. They deserve access to the records of their elected officials, and we intend to give it to them."

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The vote took place during Sunshine Week, a week intended to promote open government that was launched in 2005 by the American Society of News Editors. Ten bills covering public access to the records of the Michigan Legislature and Executive Branch include:

- **HB 4392 and HB 4386 sponsored by Reps. Ann Bollin (R-Brighton) and Tyrone Carter (D-Detroit), respectively.** These bills subject the Governor and Lieutenant Governor to the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).
- **HB 4383 sponsored by Rep. Ryan Berman (R-Commerce Twp.),** which creates the Legislative Open Records Act (LORA), which would govern public access to information in the Legislature.
- **HB 4384, sponsored by Rep. Mark Tisdell (R-Rochester),** which calls for the appointment of LORA coordinators to receive and process requests.
- **HB 4385, HB 4387, HB 4388 sponsored by Reps. Annette Glenn (R-Midland), Bryan Posthumus (R-Oakfield Twp.), and Pat Outman (R-Six Lakes), respectively.** These bills address fees and procedures for requesting and responding to records under FOIA, and appealing fees or denials of requests to the non-partisan Legislative Council Administrator.
- **HB 4391 and HB 4389 sponsored by Reps. Beau LaFave (R-Iron Mountain) and Jim Haadsma (D-Battle Creek), respectively,** which provide exemptions for certain records, clarification that the Act does not create a private cause of action or affect constitutional privileges and immunities, require that exempt materials should be separated from nonexempt materials when applicable, and require the Attorney General to advise the Legislature on the administration of the Act upon request.
- **HB 4390 sponsored by Rep. Darrin Camilleri, (D-Dearborn)** amends the Legislative Council Act by adding a provision that allows the Council Administrator to decide LORA appeals.

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