Chapter 92 of the Acts of 2020: An Act Relative to Municipal Governance During the COVID-19 Emergency

Municipal Election Extensions; Sections 1 through 5, and sections 15 and 16: These sections amend chapter 45 of the acts of 2020 to extend the dates of for municipal elections and also eliminates the caucus requirement for town elections.

- Effect of changes is to allow a city or town with a municipal caucus or annual or special municipal election scheduled between March 23rd and July 31st, 2020 to postpone up until August 1st, 2020.
- Allows a town by vote of the select board, town council or board of registrars to eliminate a municipal caucus that is scheduled to occur between March 23, 2020 and July 31, 2020 and to allow nomination papers signed by at least 10 registered voters of the town and requires that nomination papers be returned between 36 and 32 days prior to the town election.

District Essential Services; Section 6: This section amends section 11 of chapter 53 of the acts of 2020 to add "districts" to the list of local entities that may not shut off essential services for non-payment of taxes or fees as a result of COVID-19. The existing section only specifies cities and towns.

Reduced Quorum Requirement for Town Meeting; Section 7: This section would allow for a reduced quorum requirement of not less than 10% of the existing quorum for town meetings and requires that notice of this change be made at least 7 days prior to the vote of the select board.

Remote Representative Town Meetings; Section 8 and 17: This section sets forth a process for remote town meetings to be conducted for representative town meetings through means of video or telephone conferencing platforms.

Geographic Limits for Town Meeting; Section 9: This section would allow town meeting to be held outside of geographic limits of the town upon a vote of the select board and with the approval of the town moderator.

FY21 Suspension of Municipal Revenue Dedication; Appropriation from Stabilization Funds; Section 10: This section allows cities and towns to suspend the dedication of revenue (such as local option meal tax) to a stabilization fund(s) for FY2021. Also allows a selectboard or town council by 2/3 vote to appropriate from any 40:5B stabilization fund or any special fund created by special law for any purpose without legislative body approval during FY2021.

City Budget Extension; Sections 11 and 18: This section would give mayors in cities additional time before they must submit their budget to the city council for approval to due to COVID-19.

Contract Services; Sections 12 and 13: These sections would allow cities, towns and regional school districts to make payment for education-related contracted services such as transportation, custodial, food services as well as payments to education collaboratives, non-residential vocational enrollments, and inter-district tuition agreements when the COVID-19 state of emergency prevents the services from being actually rendered as a result of the state of emergency.

Emergency Educator Licenses; Section 14: This section establishes an emergency educator license process by which the Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education may issue emergency educator licenses to individuals who apply for a period of up to 180 days after the termination of the state of emergency. An emergency educator license shall be valid through June 30, 2021 or a different time specified by the commissioner, unless the license has been suspended or revoked by the Commissioner.