

Michigan ROUNDUP

January 17, 1992

Legislative Week in Review

- Panelists at the state's first **revenue estimating conference** continued their negotiations this week after failing to reach a consensus on projected revenues for this year and next. At midweek, representatives of the Engler administration and the House and Senate fiscal agencies agreed that the FY 1991-92 state budget is already at least \$130 million out of balance, prompting observers to speculate on the likelihood of a new round of budget cuts in FY 1991-92. The legislative and executive branch conferees need to reach agreement on a revenue estimate that will form the basis of the governor's 1993 budget recommendations scheduled for presentation on February 7.
- Expansion of the state's **whistleblower protection laws** was advanced this week by unanimous House passage of HJR V. The resolution proposes a constitutional amendment extending protection against reprisals to state civil service workers who report misdeeds by co-workers or supervisors. Existing laws give this protection to some, but not all, employees.
- Some state school districts would gain flexibility in **borrowing against pending aid grants** under HB 5002, passed by the House on Wednesday. The measure would permit qualifying districts to borrow as much as 15 percent of the total of anticipated state aid grants and take up to a year to repay it.
- The judicial panel appointed to review **legislative redistricting plans** received four proposals to reapportion the Michigan legislature by the January 15 deadline. The Democratic and Republican parties each filed plans, as did state Senator John Kelly (D-Detroit) and Rep. Thomas Power (R-Traverse City). Gongwer News Service reported that both parties' versions of House reapportionment resulted in at least three new districts where current incumbents would run against one another. This contrasts with the last redistricting plan, Gongwer reported, when 32 incumbents were caught in inter- or intraparty contests.
- The joint legislative committee named to help defuse the controversy surrounding the **executive-ordered reorganization** of the Department of Natural Resources met this week in subcommittee session to outline recommendations scheduled for presentation next week to the Natural Resources Commission. The legislative panel is considering recommending that DNR boards and NRC subcommittees be subject to the state's open meeting and freedom of information statutes.

Political News

- **The Rev. Jesse Jackson's** highly publicized state visit included a rally that drew some 2,500 to the capitol steps to protest the elimination of general assistance welfare and the larger related issues of homelessness and unemployment. Jackson disputed Engler's assessment of their meeting as "unproductive," telling the *Detroit Free Press*, "I don't know why he would brush it off as unproductive. That is not an attitude that lends itself to solutions."
- Second-ranking House Democrat Teola Hunter (D-Detroit) announced that she will resign her **Fifth District** seat this week. The six-term Speaker pro tem will leave the legislature Saturday to accept a post as deputy director of Wayne County Health and Community Services. Since the retirement announcement, at least one media account has reported that Hunter plans to run for Wayne County Clerk, a possibility Hunter has not publicly ruled out. Hunter's new position in the office of Wayne County Executive Ed McNamara has fueled speculation that McNamara may be positioning himself for a gubernatorial run in 1994. Meanwhile, Hunter aide Triette Lipsey announced Wednesday that she would run for Hunter's House seat in a special election that may be scheduled to coincide with March primary balloting.
- Controversial Louisiana Republican David Duke is assured a place in **Michigan's presidential primary** under a ruling this week from state Attorney General Frank Kelley. Secretary of State Richard Austin earlier had included the ex-Ku Klux Klan leader on a list of presidential hopefuls to appear on state ballots. However, state Republican party chiefs argued for his removal, contending that Duke does not reflect the aims and ideals of the party. Kelley ruled that Duke has met the legal requirements for inclusion on the March 17 state primary ballot.
- In another attorney general's ruling released this week, Democratic voters may cast primary ballots by declaring their **party affiliation** on election day. Current state law requires party preference declarations to be made 30 days before a primary, but Kelley's opinion will supersede the statute unless overturned in court.
- **State employee pension funds** have financed more jobs in other states than in Michigan, according to the *Detroit News*. The \$1.8 billion retirement fund has been invested in malls and apartment and office building sites as far-flung as Honolulu, Las Vegas, and Dallas the newspaper reported, with only \$4.4 million going to Detroit investments.