

Michigan ROUNDUP

January 24, 1992

The State of the State

■ Governor John Engler's second **State of the State** address eclipsed other legislative and political activity in Lansing this week. The half-hour address reiterated the main themes of the Engler administration—downsizing government, capping taxes, and stressing education—and hinted at several forthcoming initiatives without disclosing details. Engler's speech was telecast from the House chamber where the governor addressed an overflow crowd of legislators, judges, and invited guests. Uniformed police kept the capitol closed to the general public; a brief scuffle with protestors who sought entrance resulted in one arrest. New initiatives, promised but not spelled out in the governor's message included the following:

- A *\$1,000 tax credit* for employers who hire workers who have been unemployed six months or more.
- *Build Michigan*, a comprehensive transportation strategy to rebuild Michigan's infrastructure. The plan will not include a gasoline tax increase, Engler stated.
- *Michigan College Savings Bonds*, a means of saving for education expenses that will be offered for sale within a few months.
- A *health care initiative* to limit liability costs, increase access to care, and promote disease prevention.
- *Communities First*, a series of pilot projects to integrate state human services programs at the local community level.

■ Legislative Democrats had prepared a 20-minute **videotaped rebuttal** highly critical of the style and substance of Engler's first year that was broadcast immediately following the governor's address. Democrats were conspicuously silent during the bursts of GOP-initiated applause that interrupted Engler's speech. "They [Democrats] were especially cold tonight," Rep. Frank Fitzgerald (R-Grand Ledge) told the *Lansing State Journal*. "I hope it's not an indication of how they plan to work with the administration in the coming year."

■ Following his speech long on **auto industry** boosterism—"The best thing you can do to put Michigan back to work is to put a 'Made in Michigan' car in your garage!"—the *State Journal* disclosed that three of Governor Engler's thirteen appointed department heads drive Japanese-made vehicles.

Political News

■ The three-member **revenue consensus** panel declared an impasse last week when House Fiscal Agency negotiators declined to accept the estimate agreed to by the executive branch and the Senate Fiscal Agency. A law passed last year mandates that the three groups meet in January, before the executive budget recommendations are released, and May, prior to final legislative disposition of the budget, to agree on state revenue estimates. In the absence of consensus, Governor Engler will base his FY 1992-93 budget recommendations on the revenue estimate agreed to by his administration and the SFA.

■ As the three-judge panel charged with **legislative redistricting** begins review of plans submitted last week, it has retained the same consultant who remapped Michigan's legislative districts a decade ago. Bernie Apol, appointed as a court master to oversee the state's last reapportionment process, was hired again this week by the current court panel.

■ The **Michigan Court of Appeals** elected Judge Martin Doctoroff as chief judge and selected William Murphy as chief judge pro tem last week. Both will serve two-year terms. Doctoroff replaces Judge Robert Danhoff, whose March 1 retirement after 23 years was remarked upon by Governor Engler in Tuesday's State of the State address. Danhoff was chief judge for 16 years; his seat on the court likely will be filled by East Lansing attorney Clifford Taylor, spouse of the governor's legal counsel and unsuccessful 1990 Republican candidate for attorney general.

■ The Board of State Canvassers has set a ten-day challenge period for contesting the validity of signatures on a **term limitation** initiative petition that is headed for the November ballot. Petition organizers, who hope to limit the tenure of all elected officeholders, exceeded the minimum number of required signatures by almost 60 percent.

■ Former director of the Department of Natural Resources **David Hales** has accepted a new position as director of the Chicago Zoo.

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