

Michigan **ROUNDUP**

February 4, 1993

Legislative Week in Review

- Making up for lost time, members of the Michigan House introduced a **record quantity of proposed legislation** this week. Pushing past their post-election struggle for partisan control and the scandal in the chamber's fiscal agency, representatives sent 124 bills and three resolutions to committees. The proposed new laws cover most political "hot buttons," including campaign finance reform, property tax relief, environmental protection, and crime.
- Fewer distractions faced the upper chamber, where SB 45 last week became the **first bill passed** this session. The measure would ensure the solvency (by extending the sunset date) of the Michigan Underground Storage Tank Financial Assurance Fund (MUSTFA). House approval is required by next week to meet a federal deadline decertifying the state's programs for replacing leaking underground storage tanks.
- The 27 Democratic **staff members laid off** last week reflected the chamber's compliance with its recently negotiated shared power agreement. The plan called for an equal number of staff for both parties; under the Democrat-controlled House, their staff predominated.
- Meeting with State Treasurer Doug Roberts last week House and Senate fiscal staff formulated **consensus revenue estimates** that set revenue growth for FY 1992-93 at 4.1 percent; the group's 1993-94 general fund/general purpose estimates of \$7.7 billion is 3.5 percent below the 1992-93 appropriation. Budget Director Patricia Woodworth announced last week that the state closed its books on fiscal year 1992 with a balanced budget, which she attributed to spending cuts and tight management. A \$350-400 million deficit looms in the current fiscal year, however, and Gov. John Engler is expected to announce a series of executive-order cuts by mid-month. Reports that the administration is considering a proposal to take \$137 from the teachers' retirement fund are already drawing spirited opposition from legislators and education interests.
- The House **Appropriations Subcommittee roster** released this week puts one freshman lawmaker in a co-chair seat. Rep. Leon Stille (R-Spring Lake), former IBM manager and five-term mayor, will co-chair the regulatory subcommittee along with Democrat veteran Morris Hood, Jr. (Detroit). Former committee chair Dominic Jacobetti (D-Negaunee) was named co-vice-chair of the Education Subcommittee and will serve as well on three other subgroups: Transportation, Natural Resources and Environment, and Military and Veterans Affairs.
- In Senate **committee appointments**, Sens. Don Koivisto (D-Ironwood) and Jim Berryman (D-Adrian) will be vice-chairs of the Natural Resources and Environmental Affairs and the Technology and Energy committees, respectively. The posts were left vacant by former Sen. James Barcia's election to Congress. Sen. Debbie Stabenow (D-Lansing) will fill Barcia's seat on the Agriculture and Forestry Committee.

Political News

- President Bill Clinton's first **televised town meeting** will be broadcast from WXYZ-TV studios in Southfield next Wednesday. In what one commentator characterized as a bow to the "Rust Belt," Clinton will return to the ABC affiliate where he participated in a similar live broadcast last September. Effective security, ample parking for a national press pool, and easy freeway access are said to be among the key factors in choosing the site.
- Following White House meetings with President Clinton and fellow governors, Gov. John Engler was named to a National Governors' Association panel developing **welfare reform policies** for the new administration. Engler's welfare cuts stirred controversy locally and brought national attention; his appointment is seen as giving Michigan an important voice in the direction of national reforms.
- A proposed **liquor price hike** could raise more than \$30 million a year to help offset the state budget deficit, supporters of the move said this week. Governor Engler has recommended an increase of about 10 percent in the wholesale price of spirits, effective May 1. Although the higher price of cocktails is expected to decrease sales, overall profits are still projected to rise. The increase must be approved by the five-member Liquor Control Commission and is not subject to legislative review.
- U.S. Sen. Donald Riegle (D-Flint) will face a **1994 primary challenge** from three-term Macomb County Prosecutor Carl Marlinga. Breaking the announcement this week, the *Detroit News* noted that Riegle has not faced a primary in any of his previous three Senate terms. Marlinga's announcement is expected to flush out other rumored Riegle primary opponents who earlier expressed interest in the seat but stopped short of declaring candidacy.