

## Michigan ROUNDUP

February 6, 1992

### Legislative News

- Governor Engler used a fifteen-minute, prime time videotape on public television Wednesday to set the stage for the 1992-93 **executive budget recommendations** scheduled to go to the legislature this week. Calling the \$7.9 billion general fund budget, the "Michigan's family budget," and drawing comparisons between how households and governments must live within their resources, Engler spent the opening minutes of his presentation reviewing the rationale for the budget cuts that launched his administration last year. Although he called for bipartisan legislative support, and, overall, his message was perhaps his most conciliatory to date, the governor did chastise his Democratic opposition as the "tax-and-spend crowd in the legislature that dawdled and bickered" over last year's budget.
- Based on the past month's record, the current **legislative session** is the most ineffective in recent history, according to the *Detroit News*. House Speaker Lewis Dodak (D-Taymouth Township) says, "I've never seen it this bad," responding to the newspaper's comment that "paralyzed by partisan bickering and weak leadership and unable to decide even the most routine matters, lawmakers have failed miserably in attempts to deal with a long list of state needs, ranging from insurance reform to property tax relief." The story quotes capitol observers who say the current stalemate is even worse than the fractious legislature of 1983-84, when an unpopular tax hike fuelled successful recall drives.
- Michigan teachers may be permitted to use "reasonable physical force" to quash classroom disruptions in a **corporal punishment** bill clearing the House this week. After passing the lower chamber by a 98-5 vote, the measure was returned to the Senate, which had passed it late last year. Supporters of SB 338 say that Michigan's current ban on corporal punishment leaves teachers unable to touch students and thus without adequate means of control in the event of a classroom tussle.
- Attorney General Frank Kelly has voided enactment of a bailout bill passed last December for **indigent health care** in Wayne County. SB 510 would have funneled federal and county funds to programs for the indigent and elderly, replacing state grants that were cut. Kelly explained that the bill was unconstitutional because its original purpose—a revenue sharing amendment—was altered when the medical program funding was included. Currently, bipartisan support exists for putting the program funds in SB 213, the original supplemental appropriations bill that was left stuck in committee last year. The legislature is expected to consider SB 213 next week.

### Political News

- In the wake of a circuit court ruling banning as unconstitutional Governor Engler's proposed **reorganization of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources**, an administration spokesman says they may seek Michigan Supreme Court review, bypassing the state court of appeals. An Ingham County judge ruled last week that the gubernatorial executive order, essentially creating a new DNR, violates the state constitution since a governor cannot unilaterally establish a department. The court challenge, brought by House Democrats, the Michigan United Conservation Clubs, and the Michigan Environmental Protection Fund, halted a fundamental revamping of the DNR that was to have taken effect over the weekend. Meanwhile, according to the *Detroit Free Press*, White House Chief of Staff Samuel Skinner has "expressed great interest" in a federal legal analysis of the stymied executive order.
- Eleven leading Michigan Republicans will join chairman John Engler on the state's **Bush-Quayle campaign committee**. Appointed as cochairpersons are Lieutenant Governor Connie Binsfeld, Detroit City Council member Keith Butler, State G.O.P. Chair David Doyle, First Lady Michelle Engler, Detroit attorney Andrea Fischer, House Minority Leader Paul Hillegonds, former Oakland County Prosecutor L. Brooks Patterson, Senate Majority Leader Dick Posthumus, State Republican Party Vice-chair Laura Reyes-Kopack, and national committee members Ronna Romney and Chuck Yob.
- En route home from the winter National Governors' Association meeting, Governor Engler was a **featured speaker** at the Cato Institute, a conservative think tank, where the audience responded warmly to his presentation, "Balancing the Budget When Times Are Tough." According to Associated Press accounts, conservative activists at the program say Engler could establish a national following if he resists tax increases and sticks to his "cut and cap" campaign promise.
- The latest Public Opinion Research Institute poll, released this week, shows **health care availability** ranking as one of the top three state problems. The topic tied with education and ranked just behind job creation among those polled. The poll and analysis were conducted by Public Sector Consultants and sponsored by the Partnership for Michigan Health Care.