

## Michigan ROUNDUP

February 11, 1993

### *Legislative Week in Review*

- With one Republican defection, Gov. John Engler's proposed **property tax cut** squeaked through the Senate this week on a 19-17 vote. Sen. Fred Dillingham (R-Fowlerville) voted with the Democrats to oppose SB 146, a measure to reduce property tax assessments used for school operations over a three-year period. An amendment guarantees that the nearly \$1.25 billion cut from schools will be replaced by the state from an unspecified source. The measure faces an uncertain future in the House, where many Democrats decry the bill's failure to tie property tax relief to school finance reform.
- Four federally mandated **impaired driving bills** passed the Senate, imposing operator's license suspensions for residents convicted of driving drunk or drugged. SBs 221-223 and 267 conform Michigan with federal law; the state must pass the measures by April 1 or risk losing 5 percent of its federal highway funding.
- The first **public act** of 1993 was signed into law this week by Acting Governor Connie Binsfeld. P.A. 1 (SB 45) extends the sunset date on the state's underground storage tank financing authority, adds new revenue sources to the fund, and increases fraud penalties.
- State small businesses struggling to comply with the federal **Clean Air Act** might get a boost from HB 4073 passed by the House this week. The bill would create an office, advisory panel, and ombudsman to oversee compliance. No funds were approved for the new program, however, which would likely rely on emission fees paid by the businesses.
- Perennial controversy over "**no knock**" **police searches** began again this year in the Senate, where the Family Law, Criminal Law, and Corrections Committee reported out a bill permitting law enforcement personnel to enter homes without giving notice. Proponents of the measure—on which both legislative chambers have failed to agree in the last several sessions—observe that officers must secure a magistrate's advance approval for unannounced entries and say the technique is a major weapon in the war on drugs. Opponents argue that the measure is an unwarranted invasion of privacy with potential harm to innocent parties whose homes are raided by mistake.
- The House **session schedule** has been tentatively set through April, with a spring recess scheduled for April 6-15.

### *Political News*

- Taking his first flight on Air Force One for his suburban Detroit-based **national town meeting**, President Bill Clinton had a native son on board: former Gov. Jim Blanchard.
- While not a passenger on yesterday's flight, Michigan's **former first lady** is officially on board this week as a member of the Clinton administration. Janet Blanchard has accepted the post of assistant director for presidential personnel at the White House.
- Governor Engler's list of **proposed budget reductions and revenue increases** announced last week were as anticipated. The two largest items were the proposed capture of \$137 million from the Public School Employees Retirement health reserves and \$115 million in additional federal aid for Medicaid by boosting payments to county care facilities to earn more federal revenue. Also proposed were a \$23 million tax hike on liquor and dropping sales tax collection fees.
- U.S. Rep. David Camp was named this week to a seat on the powerful House **Ways and Means Committee**. The Midland Republican and former state representative is in his second congressional term.
- A former state budget examiner has been named temporary head of the scandal-scalded **House Fiscal Agency**. Robert McKerr will act as interim administrator beginning March 1, while a state and federal task force continues its investigation into unauthorized payments at the HFA. The agency's governing board adopted budget recommendations to keep the agency operating for the remainder of the fiscal year. The board's approval of Auditor General Thomas McTavish's proposal to leave nine positions vacant confirmed earlier reports that nearly half the HFA's annual budget was spent in the first fiscal quarter.
- New U.S. census figures describing Detroit as the nation's **poorest big city** were released this week. According to census rankings, while Michigan's poverty rate was 13.1 percent—the same as the national average—the rate for Detroit was 32.4 percent, the highest of the country's 25 largest cities. Meanwhile, Detroit Mayor Coleman Young was conspicuously absent from a conference of 40 big-city mayors with President Clinton this week. According to the *Detroit Free Press*, Mayor Young had a schedule conflict, making him and retiring Los Angeles mayor Tom Bradley the session's two absentees.