



Michigan ROUNDUP

- House Democrats and Republicans appear to have united behind a **school finance reform** proposal against the wishes of both Governor Blanchard and Senate Majority Leader John Engler (R-Mt. Pleasant). The proposal, sponsored by representatives Glenn Oxender (R-Sturgis), Michael Nye (R-Litchfield), and Nelson Saunders (D-Detroit), would raise the sales tax to 6 cents on the dollar and dedicate the revenue to reducing local property taxes by an average of 33 percent while providing \$500 million in new annual revenue for K-12 schools. A key feature of the plan would reduce the wide disparity in per-pupil spending among school districts to a range of from \$4,000 to \$6,250 within five years. The current range is from \$2,400 to \$7,000. Key support has come from House Speaker Lewis Dodak (D-Birch Run), House Taxation Committee Chair H. Lynn Jondahl (D-Okemos), and the Michigan Education Association. Blanchard, however, is insisting that his school finance plan, which calls for a one-cent sales tax increase, a 25-percent cut in property taxes, and a gradual increase in funding for schools tied to improvements in education quality, is more likely to win voter approval. Engler wants to bypass the legislature entirely by launching a Republican-led petition drive for a special election on a third proposal. Dodak says that the House could approve the Oxender-Nye-Saunders plan as early as next week.
- The American Civil Liberties Union filed a lawsuit Thursday to overturn Michigan's two-month-old law banning **Medicaid payments for abortions**. The ACLU filed the suit in Wayne County Circuit Court on behalf of a 15-year-old who was raped by three men in January. The suit asks that the state be required to pay for an abortion and that the law, approved by voters 57 to 43 percent, be declared unconstitutional because it denies the poor equal access to health care.
- *The Grand Rapids Press* reports that Governor Blanchard's proposal for a **drug czar** will face opposition from lawmakers and substance abuse control groups unless the position's job description includes control over the \$128 million in state and federal funds spent by 11 state agencies. Blanchard aides, however, say that the drug czar, who will receive \$55,000 a year, will not have control over spending by state departments or a staff to monitor the effectiveness of current antidrug programs.

Political News

- Word that State Sen. **William Sederburg** (R-East Lansing) is among five finalists for the presidency of Ferris State University has caused a firestorm of speculation about special election candidates for his seat and about political control of the Senate itself. Democrats already have decided that State Rep. **Debbie Stabenow** (D-Lansing) would run unopposed in a special primary election if Sederburg resigns. Among potential Republican candidates are **Kathy Wilbur**, Sederburg's assistant who already has considerable name recognition because she is also a member of Michigan State University's Board of Trustees; **Colleen Engler**, a lobbyist for the Michigan Townships Association, former state representative from Mt. Pleasant, and Republican nominee for lieutenant governor in 1986; and Ingham County Prosecutor **Donald Martin**.

Political strategists of both parties consider the district's electorate evenly divided, but John Engler's position as Senate majority leader and his candidacy for the Republican gubernatorial nomination in 1990 would be in considerable peril if Stabenow were to win Sederburg's seat. Her victory would divide the Senate 19-19 between Democrats and Republicans, allowing Lieutenant Governor Martha Griffiths, a veteran Democrat, to cast the tie-breaking vote on key issues, including political organization of the Senate. However, Sen. Gilbert DiNello (D-East Detroit) could save Engler's majority power. DiNello is a conservative Democrat who usually votes with Republicans on key issues. Engler has rewarded his cooperation by making him chair of the Regulatory Affairs Committee; DiNello is the only minority party member to chair a committee in either house of the legislature. Likely enjoying all the speculation is Governor Blanchard, who is expected to run for a third term and could call a special election to fill Sederburg's seat.

- The legislature has named **Charles S. Jones** acting auditor general. Jones will serve until a permanent replacement is selected for Franklin C. Pinkelman, longtime auditor general, who resigned to accept a vice-presidency with Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Michigan. Jones, Pinkelman's former chief deputy, has been with the office since 1962. He will direct a staff of 150 persons charged with conducting financial and performance audits of state departments and agencies.
- U.S. Attorney General Richard Thornburgh has recommended that President Bush name former Wayne County Executive **William Lucas** to succeed William Bradford Reynolds as assistant attorney general for civil rights. Lucas, Republican gubernatorial nominee in 1986, is a former FBI agent and Wayne County sheriff.

PSR Public Sector Consultants, Inc.

Knapp's Centre • 300 S. Washington Square
Suite 401 • Lansing, MI 48933 • (517) 484-4954