

## Michigan ROUNDUP

March 6, 1992

### *Legislative Week in Review*

- A so-called **informed consent** abortion bill previously passed by the Senate was amended by House action Thursday, removing some of its most controversial provisions. House Substitute Bill H-4 retains the required 24-hour waiting period on all abortions that was mandated in SB 141. Removed from the House version were stipulations that physicians must show pregnant women requesting abortions pictures of fetuses and discuss the potential risks of pregnancy and abortion. Governor John Engler had pledged to sign SB 141 if it reached his desk. Senate action on the substitute—which closely parallels a version earlier considered by that chamber—is expected next week.
- Michigan's **inheritance tax** would be phased out by 1996 under SB 1, passed 32-6 by the upper chamber Wednesday. Heirs paying the state's "death tax" would be offered a \$100,000 exemption in 1994, which would increase to \$200,000 in 1995, before disappearing in 1996, when a federally imposed tax would replace the state levy. The bill also incorporates a change in filing deadlines that would permit the state to realize about \$63 million in inheritance tax accruals through a one-time accounting change.
- A Senate bill restricting local government's authority over **pesticide ordinances** passed that chamber 28-10 Wednesday. SB 643 would make a community's authority to regulate pesticide sale, use, storage, and disposal subject to veto by the director of the state agriculture department. The measure follows up on a U. S. Supreme Court ruling last summer permitting local governments to enact pesticide control ordinances more stringent than state statutes.

### *Political News*

- The Michigan Supreme Court heard testimony Wednesday on a proposed **redistricting plan** from representatives of most of the twenty parties who had earlier filed written objections with the court. Chief Justice Michael Cavanaugh pledged that the high court would be both expeditious and fair in deciding the state's legislative districts for the next decade. State election officials hope that the court's decision will be released by mid-month to facilitate the primary election filing process. The three-judge panel appointed by the supreme court to recommend a reapportionment plan rejected proposals submitted to it and drew its own district plan. That plan is now the target of sharp criticism from both political parties, whose attorneys testified that a federal court is all but certain to overturn the panel's proposal.
- In the aftermath of General Motors' **plant closing** decision, GM chairman Robert Stempel categorically denied charges that Michigan's governor or other officials had not fought for keeping the automaker's state factories open. "Any suggestion to the contrary is not only wrong but mischievous," Stempel wrote to Dearborn Democratic Congressman John Dingell. "The Michigan congressional delegation, the governor, and others in Michigan state and local government were second to none ... in their willingness to explore any possibility," Stempel wrote.
- Governor Engler told an Ypsilanti audience Tuesday he intended to "draw a line in the sand" in his efforts to keep GM jobs in Michigan. Engler kept his speaking commitment in a town still blistering from last week's news of the area's auto plant closing despite personal pain: The **governor's father** died Monday night after an extended illness. Mathias Engler, 68, was a farmer active in county politics and in 1968 ran unsuccessfully for the House seat son John—who ran the campaign—went on to win in 1970. Funeral services were scheduled for Friday in Mt. Pleasant.
- The state supreme court refused this week to intervene in the controversial executive order reorganizing the **Department of Natural Resources (DNR)**. The Ingham County Circuit Court ruled that the governor acted unconstitutionally in abolishing citizen advisory commissions, creating a new department, and reassigning to staff duties formerly held by the Natural Resources Commission. The administration had asked the high court to hear the case, rather than proceeding through the Michigan Court of Appeals. In declining to do so, the supreme court directed the appellate judges to expedite their own decision.
- Lieutenant Governor Connie Binsfeld joined other state officials in requesting the U.S. Department of the Interior to designate the renovated **Michigan capitol** as a national historic landmark. If approved, the meticulously refurbished building would join 28 other state properties, including the Fox Theater in Detroit and Mackinac Island's Grand Hotel, already registered as national landmarks. Rededication of the 113-year-old capitol, restored at a cost of roughly \$60 million amid periodic legislative and public outcry at the size of the tab and the scope of the job, is tentatively scheduled for the fall.