



## Michigan ROUNDUP

### Legislative Week in Review

- A bidding war on **property tax relief** broke out on the Senate floor Wednesday, resulting in an increase of \$740 million in the FY 1990-91 school aid budget approved by a Senate committee last week. The increase was added to pay for various property tax relief plans that have been proposed: \$40 million for Governor Blanchard's proposal, \$400 million for gubernatorial candidate and Senate Majority Leader John Engler's (R-Mt. Pleasant) plan, and \$300 million to finance the Patterson-Anderson initiative petition plan. An amendment to require students to stay in school until age 18 failed to pass, incurring the displeasure of the governor, who supported it. The school aid bill, which now goes to the House, was not expected to be the vehicle for providing property tax relief. It remains to be seen whether it will remain so.
- A ruling last week by Ingham Circuit Judge James Kallman put at risk the payment of salaries and wages for about 470 employees of the **Accident Fund of Michigan**. The ruling said that since the Fund was declared a state agency, its employees must be classified as civil servants, and its budget must be appropriated by the legislature. Since neither has occurred, the House acted Thursday to approve a bill authorizing \$21.25 million of the Fund's budget to be spent. The bill now goes to the Senate, which has adjourned until next Tuesday. The employees could still be paid Friday if a higher court stays Kallman's ruling.
- A **supplemental appropriations bill** (HB 5278) for the current fiscal year is expected to be taken up by the House next week. The bill would add \$220.7 million to the FY 1989-90 budget, including a total of \$57.4 million in general fund (GF) money. In its current form, the bill provides an additional GF allotment of \$114.4 million for social services, \$46.3 for corrections, \$17 million for mental health, \$6.4 million for the state police, and \$5.9 million for public health. This \$190 million increase would be offset by a GF reduction of \$132.7 million through a 2.5 percent across-the-board cut in most departments. Only the budgets of community colleges, higher education, and K-12 would be excluded from cutbacks.
- A bill (SB 632) to prohibit **smoking in schools and on school property** was amended to allow school boards to decide how smoking will be restricted. It passed the Senate and now goes to the House.

### Political News

- A 3-0 vote this week by the Board of State Canvassers approved the form and language of an initiative petition to put legislation requiring **parental consent** for abortions back on state lawmakers' agenda. Right to Life of Michigan needs just under 192,000 signatures in order to mandate reconsideration of the measure vetoed by Governor Blanchard. If the initiative succeeds, lawmakers will have 40 days to pass the legislation, which is not subject to gubernatorial veto.
- The State Attorney General's office is investigating the travel expenses of two state legislators. Sen. Joseph Mack (D-Ironwood) is the subject of one investigation, following a newspaper report last month that he may have filed for reimbursement for commuting costs between Lansing and his Upper Peninsula home at times when he was out of the state. Rep. Ethel Terrell (D-Highland Park) is being asked to verify travel reimbursement claims for trips to Lansing during a 28-month period when she missed more than half the legislative sessions. Terrell will be challenged in the primary by Horace L. Sheffield III, who already has made her absenteeism a campaign issue.
- Adrian Mayor James Berryman has announced a run for the **11th District** Senate seat held by two-term Lambertville Republican Norman Shinkle. The southeastern border district encompasses Lenawee, Monroe, and part of Washtenaw counties.
- Jim Dingeman, president of an environmental consulting firm in Port Huron, will challenge seven-term U.S. Rep. David Bonior for the **12th District** congressional seat. Dingeman withdrew last August from a bid to unseat U.S. Senator Carl Levin.
- State Rep. William Runco (R-Dearborn) told the *Detroit News* this week that he is being wooed furiously by Republican Party leaders to challenge Sen. George Hart (D-Dearborn) in November. Unseating Hart in the **10th District** is a big piece of the Republican strategy for maintaining its slender 20-18 Senate majority.
- Amid protestations by City Council members that they were uninformed of initial discussions, negotiations went public this week over the possible purchase of Lansing's aging **Civic Arena** through state pension funds. State Treasurer Robert Bowman and Lansing Mayor Terry McKane have released conciliatory public statements about the pension fund's \$7.5 million bid for the property, hoping to garner public and council support for a plan to raze the 34-year-old building and replace it with two office towers and a parking garage.