

Michigan ROUNDUP

March 19, 1992

Legislative Week in Review

- The first of FY 1993's **budget bills** emerged this week from the Senate Appropriations Committee for subsequent floor debate:

Corrections—(SB 749) \$937.1 million in general funds (GF) is recommended, an increase of more than \$70 million from the current year, and predicated on cutting inmate bed space by 2,400 through alternative programs. The figures match the executive branch recommendation and mandate investigation of privatization.

Mental Health—(SB 753) The recommended total of \$958.9 million GF matches the governor's recommendation, with the biggest gain—61 percent—going to community mental health programs.

Public Health—(SB 756) The committee proposal of \$146.2 million GF and \$477.9 million total funds exceeds the executive recommendation by \$150,000 GF and \$12.3 million in federal funds. Much of the increase in federal funds would be targeted for programs addressing sexually transmitted diseases, poison control, birth control, and worksite wellness.

- With its March 31 deadline fast approaching, no legislative agreement is in sight on reforms to Michigan's **no-fault automobile insurance** law. The House Insurance Committee wants to meet this week to consider the vehicle bill—HB 4397—sponsored by Rep. Mary Brown (D-Kalamazoo). If the stalemate continues, lawmakers must either extend or eliminate the sunset. Elimination would continue the present system indefinitely.

- House approval of conference reports on bills expanding Michigan's **boot camps** sends SBs 334 and 335 to the governor for signature. Most offenders with sentences of fewer than three years could opt for a boot camp stint under the bills, which add two additional camps to the one now operating.

■ The two chambers are at opposite ends of the bar over **underage drinking** legislation. The Senate voted unanimously to reject House changes that watered down SBs 132-33, thereby sending the package to conference committee. The original bill language would lift driver's licenses of minors purchasing alcohol and fine those who provide it to them.

Political News

- A mere 18 percent of the state's registered voters turned out for Michigan's first two-party **presidential primary** in 16 years. Unofficial counts gave incumbent President George Bush 296,701 votes for the Republican victory, while Arkansas Governor Bill Clinton led the Democrats with 294,740 votes. County clerks attributed the underwhelming turnout to the state's less-than-open primary laws under which Democrats are required to declare their party preference to vote; Republicans are able to vote in that party's primary without making a declaration.

- Smoking in state buildings will be **snuffed out** on June 15 under an executive order issued Wednesday by Governor John Engler. The ban excludes prisons but covers motor vehicles owned or leased by the state. The restrictions against both sale and use of tobacco in public buildings place Michigan in the company of Colorado, Delaware, North Dakota, and Washington, which have similar bans aimed primarily at protecting nonsmokers from the carcinogens in tobacco smoke.

- Ten of Michigan's 18-member **congressional delegation** have been criticized for overdrawn checking accounts at the now notorious U.S. House of Representatives bank. Detroit Democratic Congressman John Conyers and Gaylord Republican Congressman Bob Davis were named by the Associated Press among the 24 worst offenders. Davis, charged with 878 overdrafts, met with constituents over the weekend and delayed his return to Washington this week in order to spend more time reassuring voters in his district.

- This news from Rome: U.S. **Ambassador Peter Secchia** told an Italian magazine, "The idea of running for the Senate when I return home . . . excites me. I think I'd win." In reporting the item, the *Detroit News* says that rumors of the Grand Rapids Republican's eagerness to return home from the post he has held since 1989 have been circulating for months.

■ State Rep. Thomas Power (R-Traverse City) announced last week that he will pass up running for a sixth **House term** in favor of seeking an open seat on the 13th Circuit Court. In other pre-campaign news, two Muskegon-area House members will swap districts if the proposed reapportionment sticks. Reps. Paul Baade (D-Roosevelt Park) and Mickey Knight (R-Muskegon) would each lose significant portions of partisan support under the new maps and are reported to have decided independently to move, essentially trading places in new districts.