



Michigan ROUNDUP

....The Senate Committee on Human Resources and Senior Citizens approved Senate Bill 67, which contains extensive reforms of the state's workers' disability compensation system. The bill generally makes it tougher for injured workers to collect disability benefits.

....Senate Bill 64, which revises the certificate of need requirements for health care facilities, was approved as substituted by the Senate Committee on Health Policy. The bill raises the capital expenditure threshold from \$150,000 to \$1.5 million and includes an amendment that uses the Detroit Consumer Price Index rather than the Medical Health Care Index in determining annual adjustments.

....Legislation to allow voters in Michigan counties to approve a gas tax of up to five cents per gallon, as well as local vehicle registration and transfer fees, was introduced by two Republican senators. The ten-bill package does not call for an increase in the statewide gas tax, now capped at 15 cents per gallon.

....The House Judiciary Committee took testimony on House Bill 4176, which allows the execution of a declaration made by a person, in advance, that his or her life-sustaining medical procedures should be discontinued under certain circumstances. A final vote is expected at the committee's next meeting. A related bill, which allows a person to appoint another individual to make medical decisions if he or she loses consciousness, will be introduced next week.

....The Washington-based Corporation for Enterprise Development released a study of the states' economic development climates. Michigan received a grade of "C" in the categories of economic performance, business vitality, and economic capacity and an "A" in the category of policy strength. Policy strength measured effectiveness of government and regulation, improvement of education and research, and help for distressed communities. While Michigan did not fare well in quality of life measures, which included life expectancy, infant mortality, and crime, it scored very well in amenities to attract and retain talent.

....House Republicans urged the House Democratic majority to act by April 15 to roll back the income tax rate. House Minority Leader Paul Hillegonds proposed lowering the rate to 4.5 percent and increasing the personal exemption from \$1,500 to \$1,750. House Democrats are awaiting answers to questions about the effect of federal tax changes before committing to a return to Michigan taxpayers of any "windfall" from the reforms--estimated to be \$170 million.

....The Secretary of State's office has asked 75 current and former state officials to explain by March 26 certain expenditures from their officeholder expense funds to make sure the officials did not use the funds for personal benefit.

....CORRECTION: The poll of Michigan residents referred to in the "political news" section of the March 6 Michigan Roundup was not conducted for the Detroit News as we reported; the poll was conducted by Casey Communications Management, Inc. and reported by the Detroit News and other state media.