

Michigan ROUNDUP

March 26, 1992

Political News

- A proposed **congressional redistricting** plan released this week reflects the downsizing of Michigan's delegation by two seats through 16 renumbered U. S. House districts. The panel set April 1 as the deadline for feedback on the plan. While widely expected to reduce the number of state Democrats (currently 11) in Congress by pitting two Democratic incumbents against each other and forcing two to run in largely Republican districts, reapportionment's first casualty was Republican Carl Pursell. The eight-term Plymouth congressman surprised observers by announcing he would retire rather than move from his current home, which is not in his new congressional district. In the aftermath of redrawn congressional maps and Pursell's retirement, political news this week was dominated by announcement and conjecture regarding who would run for what, when, and where.
- Legislative shake-ups weren't confined to congressional maps this week, as the controversial chairman of the **Senate Judiciary Committee** announced his retirement. Sen. Perry Bullard (D-Ann Arbor)—described as a "praised and despised passionate progressive" in the *Detroit Free Press*—will leave the state capitol when his term ends in December and will run for a district court judgeship in Ann Arbor. Committee vice-chairs David Gubow (D-Huntington Woods) and Michael Nye (R-Litchfield) are both said to be interested in heading the Judiciary Committee.
- Calling for Governor John Engler to issue an **executive order** outlining resolution of the \$785-million deficit, House Democrats boycotted a joint meeting of the House and Senate appropriations committees this week. Republicans criticized the tactic, observing that the last time the governor released a deficit-reducing executive order, the Democrats objected that they were not consulted. In remarks at the meeting, Department of Management and Budget (DMB) Director Patti Woodworth said that the administration wants to negotiate a solution to eliminate the deficit and then implement it through an executive order. Woodworth criticized House Speaker Lew Dodak as obstructing resolution of the deficit. The state constitution requires that when there are insufficient revenues, the DMB is to prepare an executive order containing the governor's recommendations to reduce the budget; to take effect, the executive order must be approved by both appropriations committees within ten days. Generally, initial executive orders are rejected, after which negotiations between the administration and legislature begin.
- Michigan ranks 39 out of 50 states on the well-being of its **children**, according to a report released this week in Washington. The Center for the Study of Social Policy has used such measures as rates of births to and deaths among teenagers, high school graduation, and juvenile custody rates in compiling statistics that it labels a "national pattern of child neglect."
- The National Taxpayers Union has identified U.S. Rep. Barbara-Rose Collins as the most prolific user of congressional free **mailing privileges** among her 435 House colleagues, according to a *Detroit News* report. The Democratic freshman representative from Detroit says she makes "no apology for communicating with those people I represent" and pledges to repay the \$22,000 by which she reportedly overspent her 1991 mailing account.
- A European travel specialist, currently the sales director for Grand Canyon Railway, has been named **state travel bureau director**. Thomas M. Altemus was named to the position, vacant since November, at the governor's annual tourism conference in Grand Rapids this week.

Legislative Week in Review

- The so-called **brewpub bill** permitting licensed food service establishments to sell beer brewed on the premises passed the House this week on a 93-0 vote. HB 5407 is sponsored by Rep. Curtis Hertel (D-Detroit), who says the brewpub concept has been successful in Chicago and San Francisco; he hopes the measure can be an economic development tool for Detroit.
- A measure permitting **court-ordered AIDS testing** prior to conviction in certain cases passed the House 89-9 last week and awaits Senate consideration. At present, persons arrested on a charge of prostitution can be ordered to undergo testing for venereal diseases before conviction. HB 5012 would permit HIV-status testing in the same manner.
- Parents would be fined for their elementary school-age **children's truancy** under a bill introduced by Sen. Dan DeGrow ((R-Port Huron). SB 820 would whittle the income tax exemption for parents whose children have more than two unexcused school absences in a month. Welfare parents would have their monthly benefits cut.