

Michigan ROUNDUP

April 2, 1992

Legislative Week in Review

- The legislative traffic jam on **auto insurance reform** remains a confusing snarl in many taxpayers' minds following lawmakers' approval of SB 691 and Governor John Engler's promise to veto it. State Insurance Commissioner David Dykhouse has called the legislation fundamentally flawed, but its provisions—including mandatory rate rollbacks—are moot if the governor follows through as expected with his veto threat. In that case, state auto insurance rates will be determined by methods predating 1986 Essential Insurance Act reforms that lapsed March 31. The likely effect will be that some urban drivers will see their rates lowered, while some suburban and outstate drivers will experience increases. The governor has 14 days to sign or veto the bill that passed the House 94-12 and the Senate 24-14.
- Governor Engler will issue an April 16 **executive order** outlining cuts to absorb the state's \$785 million deficit in the current year budget. The announcement ends a stalemate punctuated with increasingly vitriolic volleys between House Democrats and the administration over who should take the initiative in downsizing the budget to match recession-sapped revenues.
- The Senate passed the following five department budget bills this week: **Community Colleges** (SB 748), \$247 million general fund (GF); **Higher Education** (SB 751), \$1,304 million GF; **Corrections** (SB 749), \$937 million GF; **Mental Health** (SB 753), \$959 million GF; and **Public Health** (SB 756), \$146 million GF.
- A bill offering an **education warranty** passed the Senate 31-3 this week. SB 775 would require Michigan schools to guarantee a specified proficiency level in reading, writing, and math on the part of their graduates and provide remedial training on demand of former students or their employers for up to two years after graduation.
- SB 813, permitting alcoholic beverage sales at the **state fair**, passed the upper chamber 20-15 this week over objections that the measure was inconsistent with the legislature's expressed concern about drunk driving.
- Fifteen Michigan cities could grant tax abatements for property improvements in **enterprise zones** designed to reclaim blighted neighborhoods under provisions of SB 662, passed 37-0 Wednesday.

Political News

- The seniority of the state **congressional delegation** continues its post reapportionment plummet this week as congressmen Howard Wolpe and Dennis Hertel joined Carl Pursell in announcing their retirement when their current terms end. Thus, the loss of two U.S. House seats to redistricting has already cost the state three incumbents with 42 years of seniority among them. Wolpe's district was cut into four pieces under the new congressional maps, prompting the seven-term college professor and Africa specialist to retire rather than face a likely primary run in the new 8th District against fellow East Lansing Democratic Congressman Bob Carr. Democrat Dennis Hertel says he wants to remain in public life but announced Thursday that he will not run against longtime friend Congressman Sander Levin in a primary race for their new, shared district. Hertel, a six-term incumbent from a prominent political family, said in his retirement announcement that he was angry and frustrated with Congress. Meantime, state Senator Nick Smith (R-Addison) has formally announced his candidacy for the new 7th District seat falling vacant with the retirement of Pursell.
- The **Michigan Supreme Court** released Thursday the state House and Senate redistricting plan that had several lawmakers consulting their realtors. The *Detroit Free Press* reported that ten House contests and three Senate elections would pit a total of 27 incumbents—all but eight of them Republicans—against one another in redrawn districts unless incumbents move. The court ordered relatively minor modifications to five House districts in Detroit and otherwise let stand the plan submitted in February by a three-judge panel. The action concludes legislative redistricting unless subsequent challenges are filed in federal court.
- Tenters camped in protest on the **capitol lawn** for the past four months have until the end of the week to pull up stakes or petition the state court of appeals for an extension. Under new regulations approved by the Capitol Committee and upheld by a circuit court judge, events may no longer be held on the grounds between 11 p.m and 8 a.m., and any structures erected may not be habitable.

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