



Michigan ROUNDUP

Legislative Week in Review

- House Speaker Lew Dodak (D-Birch Run) says a bill to raise the gasoline tax by at least two cents a gallon to finance road improvements will be introduced within the next week or two. Although some have suggested that the current fifteen-cent tax be raised by at least five cents to pay also for cleaning up contamination caused by leaking underground gas storage tanks, Dodak says he doubts the House will approve an increase of more than three cents. Governor Blanchard says he would not oppose an increase, but Senate Majority Leader John Engler (R-Mt. Pleasant) believes the Senate would not approve an increase that the governor does not actively support. According to Michigan Department of Transportation Director James Pitz, who supports an increase, an additional two cents per gallon would yield about \$90 million. The tax has not been raised since 1984. Dodak wants to move quickly because he thinks Congress may increase the nine-cent federal gas tax to reduce the budget deficit, making it politically impossible to raise the Michigan levy.
- The Senate Appropriations Committee has approved its version of the 1989-90 Department of Social Services budget at \$2.2 billion, the total recommended by Governor Blanchard. The budget would increase by just \$41 million, or 1.9 percent, over the 1988-89 spending plan. General assistance is lower by \$24 million to \$193.4 million; AFDC is cut \$22 million to \$512.7 million; and diagnosis-related group (DRG) payments are down by \$7.5 million. Increases include children's services, \$36 million; administration, \$27 million; nursing homes, \$12 million; and pharmaceuticals, \$11.4 million.
- The House has passed, 90-14, a bill to give the Department of Natural Resources considerable say in the zoning of sand dune areas, despite the objections of a small band of conservatives who look upon the legislation as state intrusion on the rights of local governments. The bill would define critical dune areas, set standards for land use with participation of local governments, and guarantee protection of individual property rights. Chief sponsor H. Lynn Jondahl (D-Okemos) said the bill would prevent the irreparable loss of 60,000 acres of sand dunes to uncontrolled development.

Political News

- Quoting the independent Population Reference Bureau, the *Grand Rapids Press* reports that adjustments to account for minorities missed by the 1990 census will not cause a major change in redistribution of U.S. House seats. Michigan, with seven congressional districts among the top 35 population losers, will drop from 18 House seats to 16 despite adjustments to account for an estimated 5 percent of blacks and Hispanics that are likely to be missed in the actual count. Other states expected to lose seats are New York and Pennsylvania, three each; Illinois and Ohio, two each; and Iowa, Kansas, Massachusetts, Montana, West Virginia, and Wisconsin, one each. Gainers will be California, five seats; Texas, four; Florida, three; Arizona and Georgia, two each; and North Carolina and Virginia, one apiece.
- The Michigan United Conservation Clubs (MUCC) has received approval from the State Board of Canvassers of language for a 1990 general election ballot proposal to require that unclaimed beverage container deposits be used for environmental cleanup and recycling. The MUCC will have 180 days to collect 191,726 signatures to place its proposal on the ballot. Public Sector Consultants estimates that annual unclaimed deposits range from \$26 million to \$121 million.
- Chuck Yob, former 5th Congressional District chair for the Michigan Republican Party, claims he leads in the race to succeed Peter Secchia as the state GOP national committeeman. Yob says he has 58 of 100 possible state committee votes. Yob's major opponent is Brighton businessman Dick Chrysler. Former Oakland County Prosecutor Brooks Patterson dropped out of the race to launch a statewide petition drive to place a property tax reduction proposal on the 1990 ballot.
- The battle for the Republican gubernatorial nomination in 1990 could pit conservative State Sen. Edgar Fredricks of Holland against moderate Senate Majority Leader John Engler. Fredricks says he has received encouragement from people behind Pat Robertson's 1988 presidential campaign in Michigan. Many of Robertson's supporters oppose the candidacy of Engler, who engineered President Bush's successful Michigan Republican caucus victory over Robertson.
- State Rep. David Honigman (R-West Bloomfield) has filed as a candidate for the state Senate seat held by Richard Fessler (R-Union Lake). Honigman is in his third term; Fessler is completing his second term in the Senate after four terms in the House.