

Michigan **ROUNDUP**

April 10, 1992

Legislative Week in Review

- The Senate began its **spring recess** last Thursday, with a scheduled return on April 21. The House will remain in session through April 15, when it will recess until readjournment on April 28.
- They may call it “no fault,” but everyone is looking to lay blame for the current faceoff on **auto insurance reform**. Governor Engler’s anticipated veto of SB 691 was televised last Friday, with Engler calling the package a misbegotten election-year Democratic gimmick and deriding its promised 15-percent rate rollback as illusory. Democrats quickly launched denunciations of their own, claiming the governor has abandoned taxpayers’ interests in favor of those of the insurance industry. The state Democratic Party has purchased radio and television ads attacking the governor’s position on the issue. House Insurance Committee chair Rep. Mary Brown (D-Kalamazoo) has said that if the gubernatorial veto is not overridden she doubts that the legislature will initiate another proposal. In the face of this, AAA of Michigan has launched its own plan to put insurance reform on the November ballot. The state’s largest auto insurer, AAA Michigan insures 1.7 million vehicles in the state.
- The House this week passed HB 5228, the supplemental for CountyCare and other **indigent medical care** programs. In the process, the lower chamber removed the 21-bill tie-bar from HB 5228 that the Senate had included, linking the bill to virtually all other FY 1992 budget bills. The bill now returns to the Senate.
- The House Appropriations Committee added tie-bars of its own to a set of four **budget bills** reported out to the House floor this week. The action would link all its budget bills—except for capital outlay—so that a veto of any one would also sink the rest. The four bills awaiting action by the full House would set appropriation levels for state police, military affairs, general government, and community colleges budgets.
- A bill to increase the number of **toilets for women** in large public facilities is seriously considered by its backers, despite having been reported out of committee on April Fools’ Day and having been widely touted in the press as the “potty parity bill.” Sponsored by Rep. Jan C. Dolan (R-Farmington Hills), HB 4319 responds to studies showing that women theatergoers wait an average of fifteen minutes for the restroom, while the wait for the men’s room is only five to seven minutes.

Political News

- November’s general election ballot lengthened this week as action by the **Board of State Canvassers** approved the addition of questions on term limitation and the governor’s tax cut proposal. The board voted to certify that both issues had attracted more than the 256,000 signatures required to petition to bring a constitutional amendment before the electorate. The term limits would place caps of twelve years on U.S. senators, six years on members of Congress and state representatives, and eight years on state senators and elected officials. State canvassers have not yet certified the Democratic tax cut proposal, although certification is anticipated. Meanwhile tax reformer Richard Headlee has filed a suit in U.S. District Court challenging the canvassers board decision to reject his group’s petition to cut property taxes by 20 percent. The state supreme court has already rejected Headlee’s appeal.
- In **redistricting** news, the U.S. District Court in Detroit issued final approval Monday of the state’s congressional reapportionment after no objections were filed to the plan drawn by a three-judge federal panel. New state legislative districts, meanwhile, have been challenged by the Legislative Black Caucus, whose members voted unanimously this week to file a federal court challenge to the reapportionment plan approved by the state supreme court. The caucus, representing eleven state representatives and three senators, claims the legislative redistricting plan “packs” too many districts with minority groups, yielding too few minority-majority districts.
- New district lines continue to prompt **reelection campaign** decisions from incumbents. This week’s news has reps. M.L. “Mickey” Knight (R-Muskegon) and Margaret O’Connor (R-Ann Arbor) announcing that they will not run again for their House seats, although O’Connor is planning a run for the 8th congressional district seat against Democrat Bob Carr. Rep. Roland Niederstadt (D-Saginaw) announced that he would not move into the new district containing most of his current constituents, heightening speculation that he will retire rather than challenge House Speaker Lewis Dodak (D-Taymouth Township) for the single seat in the redrawn district where both now reside. Former state Sen. Alan Cropsy, DeWitt Republican, is said to be eyeing the new 86th House District seat that has no current incumbent.