



## Michigan ROUNDUP

### Legislative Week in Review

- Senators were back at their capitol desks this week after a 14-day **spring break**. House members began their recess later than their colleagues in the upper chamber and are due to return to session next Tuesday.
- A bill putting a two-year freeze on **property tax assessments** was unanimously reported out of the Senate Finance Committee and moved Thursday to the Senate floor, where it is expected to pass. The legislation—HB 4109 (S-2)—was originally part of the House Democrats' property tax plan; all but the freeze components were eliminated in an effort to provide temporary tax relief until agreement is reached on a more comprehensive plan.
- U.S. representatives Bob Davis (R-Gaylord) and David Bonior (D-Mt. Clemens) have introduced a bill to sink a package of new **recreational boating fees** adopted last fall as part of Congress's deficit reduction package. The new levies range from \$25 for a 16-foot boat to \$100 for vessels over 40 feet and would apply to most boats on the Great Lakes. The fees are opposed by the boating industry, which claims they would slow sales and force marine construction layoffs.
- Senate action on HB 4010, which regulates **off-road vehicles (ORVs)**, is expected to be completed this week after senators rejected 21-7 an amendment banning ORVs from state-owned land. As approved by the House, HB 4010 limits use of the controversial vehicles on public lands to specifically designated trails, except in the Upper Peninsula.
- The Senate's rejection of a House amendment to a **no-fault auto insurance bill** (SB 154) sends the proposal to a 6-member conference committee, where a compromise package of reforms will be developed. Some senators decry this step, arguing that consensus on insurance reform is sufficiently important to warrant formulation on the chamber floor. Conference committee reports cannot be amended and must be accepted or rejected in their entirety.

### Political News

- In a **surprise resignation**, influential Oakland County Senator Doug Cruce (R-Troy) left the legislature this week to become president of the Lansing-based Michigan Insurance Federation. Cruce, who won a third term in November and was the new chairman of the Senate's Commerce Committee, which oversees all insurance legislation, told the *Detroit Free Press* that his decision came from a need to change careers and increase his income. Cruce reportedly has signed a four-year contract for considerably more than his \$45,000 annual legislative salary. A longtime political ally of Governor Engler, Cruce had been viewed as a key actor in Michigan Republican politics.
- The ripple effect from the Cruce resignation could be extensive once the date for a **special election** to fill the seat is set by the governor. Incumbent representatives being mentioned as potential candidates include Republican veterans Shirley Johnson and Gordon Sparks as well as freshman Michael Bouchard. Possible Democratic contenders whose names surfaced early included State Rep. Wilfred Webb, former Michigan First Lady Paula Blanchard, and attorney John Freeman, who opposed Cruce on last November's ballot.
- White House officials confirmed Wednesday that President George Bush will accept a **University of Michigan honorary degree** next month following a commencement address there. This will be Bush's second appearance in Ann Arbor; hecklers disrupted a 1985 speech by the then vice-president in honor of the Peace Corps' 25th anniversary.
- U.S. Representative Curtis Hertel (D-Harper Woods) says he fears Pentagon strategists are moving a disproportionate share of **Army facilities** from the economically depressed Midwest to the more prosperous South. Hertel's district includes the 5,000-employee Army Tank-Automotive Command headquarters and adjacent tank manufacturing plant in Warren; both may be relocated to Alabama under recommendations now pending before Secretary of Defense Richard Cheney. Hertel told the *Detroit Free Press* that one study showed the Northeast and Midwest were sites for 27 percent of the nation's military installations but absorbed 66 percent of the Pentagon's 1988 facility closings.
- About 40 members of Congress have been invited to spend a day in Detroit this month in an effort to bolster what the automobile industry perceives as a sagging image, unfavorable legislation, and restrictive regulation in Washington. U.S. representatives Sander Levin (D-Southfield) and John Dingell (D-Dearborn) are among the organizers of the Motor City Tour. Dingell chairs the House Commerce Committee; his wife, Debbie, is director of administration and strategic planning for General Motors and is overseeing some of the arrangements.
- Two changes in the Senate Appropriations subcommittee roster were announced this week: John Schwarz (R-Battle Creek) replaces Phil Arthurhulz (R-Whitehall) on the Social Services subcommittee, and Robert Geake (R-Northville) replaces Schwarz on the Regulatory subcommittee.

Compiled by David L. Kimball

**PSC** Public Sector Consultants, Inc.

Knapp's Centre • 300 S. Washington Square  
Suite 401 • Lansing, MI 48933 • (517) 484-4954