



Michigan ROUNDUP

April 16, 1992

Legislative Week in Review

■ In a series of bare-minimum partisan votes, the House **approved eight budgets** for FY 1992-93 before adjourning for spring recess. Only the state police budget attracted any Republican support, with two GOP lawmakers joining the 55 House Democrats. Republicans refused to support the measures, claiming the bills were being rushed through the chamber on the eve of a recess. Democrats countered that the schedule was in keeping with a previously announced timetable. Six more agency budgets await House consideration when representatives reconvene on April 28. Budgets passed Wednesday include: *community colleges* (SB 748), \$246.8 million general fund (GF); *corrections* (SB 749), \$937 million GF; *education* (HB 5513), \$40 million GF; *higher education* (SB 751), \$1,202.7 million GF; *mental health* (SB 753), \$958.9 million GF; *military affairs* (HB 5516), \$28.5 million GF; and *state police* (HB 5515), \$205 million GF.

■ Governor John Engler submitted **cost-cutting executive orders** to a joint meeting of the House and Senate Appropriations committees Thursday. With both legislative chambers formally in recess, Engler unveiled proposals to erase a \$785 million deficit, including \$130 million in cuts, mostly in capital outlay and fund balances, and taking \$150 million from the state's "rainy day" fund. The proposed cuts—which must be acted upon by the legislature within ten days—also include more than \$500 million in bookkeeping changes and one-time cost savings like delaying state revenue-sharing payments to local governments and reducing reserves for school retirees' health care. The governor's plan avoids reductions in education, as well as arts programs, state police, corrections, and social services—areas of heavy cuts last year.

■ A bill to **redistribute judgeships** among the state's district and circuit courts was passed by the House and returned to the Senate this week. Senate changes in HB 5437, eliminating district judge positions in East Lansing and Pontiac, were overturned in the House, making it likely that the measure will end up in conference committee.

■ Oakland University could use **liquor sales** to help ease its Meadowbrook Festival deficit under provisions of SB 794 passed by the House this week. The bill would allow universities to sell alcohol at certain outdoor programs and was targeted to assist the financially troubled music fest in Rochester.

Political News

■ A PSC survey released this week lists the **economy and unemployment** at the top of the state's worry list. Of 800 residents polled in the Michigan Hospital Association-sponsored *Public Opinion Monitor (POM)*, 47 percent considered it likely that they or a family member would lose their present job within the year. Sixty percent named the economy and the lack of jobs as the most significant problems facing the state.

■ President George Bush and Congress pulled lower **approval ratings**—41 percent and 20 percent, respectively—in this *POM* poll than they did in last fall's. Gaining ground were Governor Engler (going from 44 percent approval in October to 51 percent in March) and the state legislature (going from 34 percent approval in October to 39 percent in March). Engler's rating is his highest in the poll since his election, breaking the 50-percent mark for the first time.

■ The longest **on-site protest** in capitol history was ended last week with the removal of tents and protestors representing Up and Out of Poverty Now, an advocacy group for the homeless. Two tents, assorted signs, a generator, and a portable toilet had marked the 124-day protest across the street from the executive offices. Police arrested three protestors who failed to leave the site in compliance with new regulations banning overnight vigils on the capitol grounds. The group vows to continue nonresidential protest at the capitol during the day.

■ Incumbents and aspirants continue to announce **campaign plans** in the wake of reapportioned legislative and congressional districts. Freshman Rep. Stephen Dresch (R-Hancock) told the press this week he will run against seven-term Republican Congressman Bob Davis. Waterford Republican Brian Whiston, an aide to former state Sen. Rudy Nichols, announced his candidacy for the 44th House District seat being vacated by Republican Claude Trim, who is not running for reelection. Dick Chrysler, a Brighton Republican who unsuccessfully sought his party's 1986 gubernatorial nomination, plans to run for the new 8th Congressional District seat. Chrysler will challenge Rep. Margaret O'Connor in the primary, with the winner likely facing incumbent Democrat Bob Carr.

