

Michigan ROUNDUP



Legislative Week in Review

- A panel of business, education, and labor leaders charged with forging a compromise on **school finance reform** agreed Wednesday to a proposal that would raise the sales tax by one-half cent and require schools to adopt quality standards as a condition of receiving state funds. The tax increase is expected to provide an additional \$400 million a year for public schools, of which \$135 million would be available for schools that implement quality measures, such as a core curriculum, long-range school improvement plans, annual education reports, and state accreditation standards. The bulk of the new money would go to districts with below-average spending. While containing no specific recommendation on reducing property taxes, the plan does offer several options for the legislature to consider. The panel is to present its proposal to the group's mediator, Edgar Harden, and then to legislative leaders. Two-thirds of both the House and Senate must adopt the plan before it can be placed on the ballot for voter approval.
- The House Appropriations Subcommittee on **Higher Education** reported out the FY 1989-90 budget (HB 4338). Although details were not released, it appears the subcommittee recommendations will exceed the governor's by \$11.4 million. It also is recommended that about \$26 million in Research Excellence Fund monies remain in the higher education budget. The bill now goes to the House Appropriations Committee, which is expected to take it up Monday.
- Legislation is expected to be introduced next week by Sen. Richard Posthumus (R-Lowell) that would reduce **auto insurance** premiums by 10 percent and limit litigation for pain and suffering resulting from auto accidents. The determination as to the seriousness of the litigant's pain and suffering would be made by a judge rather than a jury, as is now the case.
- Sen. William Faust (D-Westland) introduced a bill to change the offense of illegally distributing **anabolic steroids** from a misdemeanor to a felony. To achieve more control over the legal dispensing of steroids, the bill makes steroids a controlled substance, prescriptions for which must be reported to the state. Similar legislation has been introduced in the House.
- The Senate passed legislation requiring that farmers provide **agricultural workers access to toilet facilities**—one facility per 20 workers. The bill allows farmers who employ fewer than 11 workers more flexibility in how they choose to provide access to facilities.

Political News

- The *Detroit News* reported Wednesday that the powerful **Michigan Education Association** has told Governor Blanchard that its members will not buy tickets to his upcoming annual fundraiser. In a letter to gubernatorial Executive Secretary Ron Thayer, MEA President Larry Chunovich wrote: "We will not be participating in this year's Riverboat Jim-boree. Educational finance reform is our number one priority and we will be directing all our resources to achieving this goal rather than participating in your fundraiser." The MEA reportedly is upset with the governor's "lack of leadership" on educational finance reform.
- The *Detroit Free Press* reports that President Bush may formally announce today his decision to nominate former Wayne County Executive **William Lucas** as assistant attorney general for civil rights. U.S. Rep. John Conyers (D-Detroit) said Thursday that the Congressional Black Caucus will support the nomination.
- Former Oakland County Prosecutor L. Brooks Patterson reaffirmed his intentions to lead a statewide petition drive to reduce property taxes regardless of efforts under way in the legislature to address this issue. He expects to have the proposal language ready by June and petitions circulating by midsummer. The major goals of the proposal are to reduce property taxes without increasing other taxes and to allocate more money for education while retaining local control.
- Republican Congressman Bill Schuette sent a letter to Republican state legislators stating he is seriously considering challenging Democrat Carl Levin in the **1990 Senate race**. Schuette asked for their "advice" on the race and consideration of his candidacy.
- Noting the possibility that the legislature may adopt **FY 1989-90 budget bills** that exceed his budget recommendations, Governor Blanchard warned he would not hesitate to veto such increases. His comments came in response to a letter he received from 12 House democrats expressing concern about a large number of unfunded and underfunded mandated and existing programs and executive initiatives in the governor's proposed budget. The legislators have asked the governor to "recommend to each subcommittee chair which of these services you no longer wish us to provide."
- Detroit accountant and 1985 mayoral candidate Tom Barrow said he will announce next Thursday his decision on whether again to challenge Mayor Coleman Young in the **1989 Detroit mayoral race**. In recent weeks Barrow has been the subject of several news stories alleging he and his accounting firm mismanaged the finances of New Center Hospital.