

Michigan ROUNDUP

Legislative Week in Review

....The House Taxation Committee Wednesday passed the Democratic version of a proposed constitutional amendment to **reform school financing** by raising the state sales tax from 4 percent to 6 percent, cutting property taxes by nearly \$1.3 billion, and providing \$620 million in new revenue for K-12 education. The proposal would come before voters in the August primary. None of the eight Republicans on the 20-member committee voted for the resolution. Because it would change the constitution, the resolution needs approval of two-thirds (73) of the House membership (109). Democrats control 63 House seats.

Committee Republicans objected to the resolution because it does not specify how the new money would be spent, does not include a formula for reducing funding inequities among school districts, and would increase business taxes. Committee Chair H. Lynn Jondahl (D-East Lansing) said that companion bills specifying core curriculum, drop-out prevention measures, an equal funding formula, preschool education programs, and reductions in class sizes would be passed prior to the primary.

....The House and Senate appropriations committees have reported several **budget bills**, most of which exceed Governor Blanchard's recommendations. The House committee approved a general government bill of \$427.6 million, \$1.6 million more than the Governor's plan; a Department of Agriculture budget of \$51.1 million, \$1.4 million more than the Governor's request; \$22 million for military affairs, \$300,000 more; \$1.5 billion for transportation, \$100 million less; and \$262.8 million for the Department of Natural Resources, equal to the Governor's proposals. The Senate committee's \$1.1 billion university budget exceeds the Governor's by \$14.6 million, and the community college bill of \$201 million contains \$2.6 million more than Blanchard requested.

Political News

....The Michigan Senate Wednesday approved legislation instituting a closed **presidential primary** in 1992. The bill, which passed 32-5, would require voters to declare their party preference at least 30 days before the primary, which would be held on the third Tuesday in March. Democratic and Republican leaders have endorsed the legislation. Sen. Edgar Fredricks (R-Holland) objected, saying the bill would "disenfranchise independents" by allowing only those who declare a party preference to vote. Democrats backed the legislation because it conforms to their national party rules, which were changed after the 1976 election to prevent Republicans from voting in Democratic primaries. Republican officials, while generally opposing a closed primary, nevertheless supported the bill as the only way to achieve a compromise reinstating presidential primaries. Both parties used caucuses and conventions to select delegates to their 1984 and 1988 conventions. The primary will cost taxpayers \$5.2 million, according to the Secretary of State.

....House Majority Floor Leader Lew Dodak (D-Birch Run) and Taxation Committee Chair H. Lynn Jondahl (D-East Lansing) say they are looking for support to run for **Speaker of the House** if incumbent Gary Owen decides to retire. Owen (D-Ypsilanti Township) has not yet announced whether he will seek his ninth term in the House and fourth as Speaker.

....Governor Blanchard said Thursday that if Michael Dukakis wins the Democratic presidential nomination, he should consider **Sen. Albert Gore** as his running mate. Dukakis could use Gore's strength in the South, Blanchard said.

....The Michigan Civil Service Commission Thursday named **Martha Bibbs** to head the Civil Service Department. Bibbs, 48, is the first female and first black to head the department. She replaces John Hueni, who is retiring.