

## Michigan ROUNDUP

April 23, 1992

### *Legislative Week in Review*

- The state's gaping, near-\$800 million **current year deficit** got whittled this week by action in the Senate and House appropriations committees on the three budget-cutting executive orders issued last week by Governor Engler. Back from spring recess, the Senate spending panel approved all three gubernatorial proposals. The House recessed last week, but because lawmakers must respond to executive orders within ten days, appropriations committee members remained in Lansing to consider Engler's cuts. While complimenting the governor's initiative in forwarding the budget-balancing proposals, in the end, the lower chamber approved only one of his proposed reductions. The measure saves \$168 million through funding changes in the State Employees Retirement Fund. A further agreement (technically not part of the executive order) recaptures \$50 million through accounting changes in the inheritance tax. Executive orders cannot be amended, guaranteeing ongoing negotiation between the administration and the legislature on the two rejected gubernatorial proposals. The proposals would have trimmed \$128 million in reductions and unexpended fund balances, of which only about \$26 million would be cut from departmental operations, and \$300 million in financing shifts, including delayed revenue sharing payments and reduced contributions to the School Employees Retirement System Health Benefits Retirement Fund. The state's Budget Stabilization ("rainy day") Fund is also in contention. The governor's plan called for using \$150 million of its \$195 million balance; Democrats argue that the full balance should be applied toward erasing the deficit.
- As expected, the Senate returned to work and quickly rejected House amendments to four Senate-originated **budget bills**, sending 1992-93 appropriations bills for community colleges, corrections, higher education, and public health to conference committees. On a 20-14 vote, the upper chamber approved House changes in the mental health budget, reflecting the continuing controversy over facility closings and deinstitutionalization of patients. The Senate's concurrence could be reconsidered when a vote on granting immediate effect to the budget bill is taken next week.

### *Political News*

- The clout of Michigan's **congressional delegation** continues to crumble as powerful incumbents announce retirement. Last week William Broomfield, senior Republican on the House Foreign Relations Committee, disclosed that he would not seek a nineteenth term. The Broomfield native and senior Michigan Republican could keep an estimated \$650,000 in his campaign fund by retiring this year; he has said he intends to establish an educational foundation with the money. Oakland County Republican Chairman Joe Knollenberg quickly announced his candidacy for the seat in a primary for which West Bloomfield State Senator David Honigman (R) has already declared his interest.
- Republicans in Western Michigan have **broken ranks** dramatically, with Second Congressional District Republican Chair Glenn Hop leading a local GOP contingent calling for the retirement of Congressman Guy Vander Jagt (R-Luther). Chair of the National Republican Congressional Committee and a fourteen-term incumbent, Vander Jagt attended the Holland press conference on Monday at which critics called for him to step down. Vander Jagt recently alienated party regulars by publicly denouncing check-bouncing Democrats in nearly the same breath that he urged reelection support for Republican Congressman Bob Davis, who has been characterized as one of the top bad check writers in the recent House bank scandal. In a prepared statement State Sen. William Van Regenmorter (R-Jenison) said this week he would give "serious consideration" to supporters seeking to draft him for a run on Vander Jagt's seat.
- Making official recent weeks' speculation, Sen. John Schwarz (R-Battle Creek) announced his bid for the new congressional **Seventh District** seat. Much of the new district comprises retiring incumbent Howard Wolpe's marginally Democratic Third District, as well as parts of outgoing Republican Carl Pursell's Second District. Among Schwarz's primary challengers will be Senate colleague Nick Smith (R-Addison).
- A six-year legal wrangle over **sobriety checkpoints** continues this week, with the state appeals court ruling that surprise police roadblocks to screen for impaired drivers violates motorists' state constitutional rights. Check lanes operated briefly in Michigan in 1986 when a series of legal challenges to so-called sniff searches to nab drunk drivers precipitated a 1990 U.S. Supreme Court ruling that the practice did not violate U.S. constitutional protections against unreasonable searches. The matter has since pended in state courts, and advocates for the practice vow to appeal the case to the state supreme court.