

## Michigan ROUNDUP

April 23, 1993

### *Legislative Week in Review*

- Back from their two-week recess, House members moved quickly into a thicket of **medical malpractice reform** measures. By midweek lawmakers had considered two different substitutes (H-1 and H-2) for SB 270, the compromise reform bill hammered out in the Senate. Representatives settled on H-2, which would cap noneconomic damages at levels 50 percent lower than those provided in H-1 and has the backing of a health care coalition that includes the state medical society and the state's two medical malpractice insurers. Under the shared power agreement, Democrats have control of the floor in April. Spring recess has consumed half the month, leaving Democrats—who have cited medical malpractice reform as one of their top legislative priorities—especially eager to forge a final package for passage.
- The Senate returned from break to pass an “**informed consent**” bill similar to one passed by that chamber last year. SB 384 requires women seeking abortions to wait 24 hours before undergoing the procedure; it also requires pre-surgical counseling and patients' written consent. Prospective patients must be provided with drawings depicting the developmental stage of the fetus (as opposed to photographs, which proved to be the most controversial aspect of last year's bill). Last year's measure failed to pass the House, with opponents charging that the legislation is aimed less at the promoting the interests of the prospective patient and more at limiting access to the procedure.
- On a 31–4 vote, a controversial **adoption bill** passed the Senate that could help a Michigan couple in their nationally publicized legal struggle to keep their adopted daughter over the subsequent objections of her birth parents. SB 191 stipulates that the best interests of adopted children must be considered in custody cases. The provision will not help the DeBoer family unless a state court of appeals ruling that Michigan has no standing in the case is overturned by the Michigan Supreme Court.
- Illegal drug manufacturers making the highly addictive **designer drug** methcathinone—known as “cat”—face new criminal penalties under Public Act 25 of 1993 signed by the governor this week. Chemically similar to methamphetamine, cat had been showing up in Upper Peninsula drug raids, where underground chemists were able to alter the chemical structure of the drug so that it was not prohibited under existing controlled substance statutes.
- *Correction:* The March 25 issue reported no new money for school aid in the governor's FYs 1993–94 and 1994–95 proposed budgets. This is true as regards the general fund; however, school aid would be increased in each year by \$94 million from an estimated increase in lottery and sales tax revenues.

### *Political News*

- Gov. John Engler took to the airways this week to stir up public support for **Ballot Proposal A**. The measure to hike state sales taxes and change school financing that fast-tracked through the legislature earlier this month had its language certified during the legislative recess by the Board of State Canvassers. The measure goes before voters on June 2. Speaking before a hand-picked studio audience of 70 for his live television broadcast from a Southfield station, Engler urged public support for the measure. “Many will ask, ‘What's in it for me?’ But what's in it for kids, what's in it for Michigan's future is the right question,” Engler said, as quoted in the *Detroit News*.
- Voters in two House Districts will face **primary elections** as well as the statewide ballot proposal on June 2. That day has been set for special primaries to fill the vacancies created in the 65th District by Rep. Philip Hoffman's election to the state Senate and in the 3rd District by the April 9 death of Rep. Joe Young, Sr. Special general elections for the two seats are set for June 29. The two empty seats leave the House evenly split between parties, 54–54. The election schedule set by the governor is so tight that potential candidates outside the 3rd District will be unable to establish the required 30-day residency before the filing deadline.
- Former Michigan Republican Party Chairman Spencer Abraham disclosed plans to **seek the U.S. Senate seat** held by Democrat Donald Riegler. Abraham served most recently as deputy chief of staff to former Vice President Dan Quayle.
- Recently announced **Republican committee assignments** include the following. Sen. Phil Hoffman (Horton) will chair the Natural Resources and Environmental Affairs Committee and will be vice-chair of the Technology and Energy Committee. Rep. Bob Brackenridge (St. Joseph) will chair the House Republican Policy Committee. Rep. James McNutt (Midland) has been named co-chair of the Corrections Committee.