



Public Sector Reports

Michigan ROUNDUP

Legislative Week in Review

- All of the FY 1989-90 state budget bills, with the exception of capital outlay, have passed one house and are in the second house for consideration. The Senate Fiscal Agency reports that to date the total general fund appropriations for the bills exceed the governor's recommendations by about \$45 million. The bills are expected to be sent to conference committees by the end of May; the legislature is likely to adjourn by June 15.
- The higher education budget bill (HB 4338) passed the House Wednesday with a total general fund appropriation of \$1,186 million, including grants, financial aid, and \$26 million in Research Excellence Fund (REF) monies, which the governor recommended be transferred to the Department of Management and Budget. This amount exceeds the governor's FY 1989-90 recommendations by \$11.7 million if REF monies are excluded.
- The school finance reform plan recommended last week by a coalition of business, education, and labor leaders has received a lukewarm and skeptical response from legislative leaders. The plan calls for an increase of one-half cent in the sales tax, raising about \$400 million for public schools, and another hike of one-half cent to be used to provide for property tax relief. There is concern that revenues would be inadequate for either purpose. Details of the plan, including whether there should be one or two ballot proposals, have yet to be ironed out.
- On Thursday the Senate passed Sen. Frederick Dillingham's (R-Fowlerville) patients' rights legislation, keeping the fetal rights provision in the bill. Pro-choice and anti-abortion advocates inside and outside the legislature have faced off on this provision, which allows the probate court to appoint a guardian to act in the best interests of an embryo or fetus if an incapacitated pregnant woman has designated someone to make medical treatment decisions on her behalf. Dillingham's bill differs from Rep. David Hollister's patients' rights bill, which has not emerged from House committee; the Dillingham version would prohibit a patient advocate from authorizing deprivation of nutrition and hydration if the reason is to cause the patient's death.

Political News

- Detroit politics is receiving more play than state politics this spring. Accountant Tom Barrow, who lost to Coleman Young in 1985 by 61-39 percent, has launched his second bid for mayor. Young is expected to run for a fifth term. In addition to Barrow, city council president Erma Henderson, businessman Charles Costa, and former insurance agent Walter Espy may seek the office.
- President George Bush received a C+ grade from state voters surveyed April 10-11 by Gordon S. Black for the *Detroit News*. Giving the president good or excellent ratings were 49 percent of respondents; 44 rated his performance as fair or poor. Voters considered foreign relations Bush's strongest suit, the John Towner nomination his weakest point. When asked whether the chief executive or Congress was doing a better job so far, respondents chose President Bush over the lawmakers by a 40-29 percent margin.
- One member of Congress, U.S. Senator Carl Levin, scored well in the same *Detroit News* survey. His performance was rated excellent or good by 59 percent of voters; 31 percent scored his performance as fair or poor. Levin is up for reelection in 1990. The head of the senator's Washington office, Gordon Kerr, is quoted in the *News*: "These numbers are very good and that's very gratifying."
- Congressman Paul Henry (R-Grand Rapids) announced Thursday that he no longer is in the running for the Senate seat. Other potential candidates in the 1990 senatorial campaign are Congressman Bill Schuette (R-Midland), who is seeking campaign counsel from Bush confidant Bob Teeter; Grand Rapids businessman Dick DeVos; Grosse Pointe attorney Clark Durant; and Grosse Pointe businessman James Dingeman.
- The *Grand Rapids Press*, citing information from the Secretary of State's Election Division, reports that a dozen candidates in Michigan House races spent more than \$100,000 apiece in their campaigns. In 1986, no candidate spent more than \$87,000. The average cost of races grew as well, increasing from \$38,344 in 1982 to \$48,274 in 1988. The expense of running discourages challenges to incumbents, according to Karen Merrill of Common Cause of Michigan, who adds that costs have jumped due to more money contributed by political action committees (PACs); in the 1988 state House campaigns, PACs contributed \$6.5 million. The campaign bill exceeded \$200,000 in six House districts: 31, 40, 46, 83, 97, and 109.