

## Michigan ROUNDUP

April 30, 1992

### Legislative Week in Review

- As National Crime Victims Rights Week winds down, both the executive and legislative branches have unveiled **law enforcement** packages. The House weighed in first, announcing on Tuesday a 13-bill bipartisan package addressing incarceration and parole issues, including substance abuse by prisoners. On Wednesday Governor John Engler outlined an expansive proposal including 30 bills and constitutional amendments that focus on drug trafficking laws. One proposal is analogous to the "polluters pay" legislation passed last year; drug dealers could be sued for damages they caused to individuals and/or communities. Engler urged lawmakers to adopt his recommendations—which include broadened wiretapping and search authority, mandatory minimum marijuana fines, and tighter gun control for convicted felons—before their summer recess. That appears unlikely, given that the proposed legislation has not yet been introduced by lawmakers.
- The House returned to session from its spring recess and passed the following five **department budgets** this week:
  - Natural Resources* (HB 5523)—The general fund (GF) total of \$104.7 million reflects the restoration by the House of \$11.6 million to restore the Air Quality Control program. The executive budget recommended supporting the program through new fees that were not included in the Appropriations Committee proposal.
  - Agriculture* (HB 5527)—At \$26.9 million GF, the proposed departmental appropriation includes \$1.2 million for the perennially controversial Pontiac Silverdome subsidy.
  - Transportation* (HB 5517)—As passed by the House, the \$2,325 million budget contains no general fund spending. Enabling legislation to fund the governor's proposed "Build Michigan" program has not yet been drafted.
  - Regulatory* (HB 5522)—Covering the departments of Commerce and Labor, spending plans totaling \$92.3 million GF were approved along with language barring privatization of the state Accident Fund and liquor warehouses.
- The Senate's **Appropriations Committee** this week reported out the last two Senate-originated budgets for the 1992–93 fiscal year: School aid (SB 226) and education (SB 750) may be considered by the full Senate next week.
- With a 37–1 vote the Senate passed a measure aimed at guaranteeing the **solvency of insurers** in the state. HB 5214 requires annual independent audits, financial statement disclosure, and examination of insurance companies operating in Michigan. The bill is tie-barred to the Senate's portion of the oversight package, SB 692.

### Political News

- "Inefficient, confusing, and cumbersome," was the verdict of the state's **Commission on Adoption** on a system that could have a backlog of 7,000 children by the year 2000 if the commission's recommendations are not heeded. Headed by Lt. Governor Connie Binsfeld, the gubernatorial panel studied potential streamlining of court, adoption agency, and state procedures for a year before releasing its findings this week.
- The twenty-first anniversary of the passage of the **Occupational Safety and Health Act** (OSHA) was observed Tuesday by organized labor groups to call attention to workers killed or injured on the job. In Michigan, homicide is the leading cause of death in the workplace, according to the *Detroit News*. Nationally, murder—typically involving robbery—is the third largest cause of workplace death after motor vehicle and machinery accidents.
- In this week's episode of "All My Districts," ten-term Bay City Democratic Congressman Bob Traxler announced his **retirement plans** to a surprised constituency. At the state capitol, four incumbents with 56 years of legislative service among them announced their retirements. Rep. John Bennett (D-Redford), tied with Rep. Richard Young (D-Dearborn) as the second longest-serving House incumbent, elected to step down rather than run against Young in their newly combined district. In a similar vein, Rep. Roland Neiderstadt (D-Saginaw) made the expected announcement that he would not challenge House Speaker Lewis Dodak (D-Taymouth Township) in their single, redrawn district. Rep. Keith Muxlow (R-Brown City) says he may run for Traxler's seat, while Rep. Thomas Hickner (D-Bay City) is reported to be planning a run for county executive. Former Democratic Sen. David Serotkin, recalled in the 1983 backlash against a state income tax increase, has announced his candidacy as a Republican for the new 67th House District. There is no incumbent in the district. In other upcoming races, former Oakland County Prosecutor L. Brooks Patterson announced his bid this week for Oakland County executive.