

Michigan ROUNDUP

May 7, 1992

Legislative Week in Review

- Passage of Senate Joint Resolution E by the House of Representatives Thursday will add a **twenty-seventh amendment** to the U.S. Constitution. Originally proposed by James Madison more than 200 years ago, the measure restricts members of Congress from receiving a pay raise until after the next election, effectively providing a local referendum on their pay hike. Michigan became the 38th state to ratify the amendment, following its approval earlier this week by Alabama and Missouri.
- Despite the House Appropriation Committee's rejection on Tuesday of an **executive order** cutting the current fiscal year's deficit, there was guarded optimism this week that a compromise resolution was close at hand. Despite partisan differences focusing on Detroit's Lafayette Clinic, whose funding would be slashed under Engler administration proposals, and the Republicans' interest in gaining some inheritance tax relief as a concession in return for restoring some proposed cuts, observers agree that this process is not the dogfight that last year's budget-balancing imbroglio proved to be.
- Legislative progress continues, meanwhile, on **1993 budgets**, with House approval of spending levels for the *Department of Social Services* (HB 5514), \$2.2 billion general fund, and *General Government* (HB 5520), \$440 million general fund.
- In the Senate, Governor Engler's "**Build Michigan**" transportation program was being legislatively assembled this week in the form of four bills authorizing local road and bridge projects, while the upper chamber's Appropriation Subcommittee on Transportation approved the addition of \$78 million to the Department of Transportation budget to fund the proposal. The House had deleted this provision in its version of the budget bill.
- Two measures **boosting revenues** in the Michigan Children's Trust Fund by more than \$600,000 yearly were passed by the Senate this week. SBs 208 and 209 increase the fees for birth certificates by \$4 and restrict the revenues to the trust fund, which finances local programs to fight child abuse and neglect.
- Municipalities slogging through eighty or more inches of **annual snowfall** got a unanimous boost in the Senate this week through passage of SB 555. The bill shortens to a few months the current snow removal reimbursement process that previously could take up to two years.

Political News

- A political deadlock in the Board of State Canvassers throws into limbo the Democratic **property tax relief** ballot initiative. By a 2-2 vote, the board defeated the staff recommendation for certification of 218,000 petition signatures, which would have placed the plan on the November 3 general election ballot if the legislature failed to enact it. The partisan vote reflects Republican allegations of improper petitioning and invalid signatures. The board will not resolve these issues, since another 2-2 tie vote also defeated a motion to hold hearings on the matter. Last month, a rival Republican-sponsored plan for property tax relief was certified by the canvassing board. House Speaker Lewis Dodak (D-Taymouth Township) says a suit seeking court-ordered approval of the petition's validity is likely the only way out of the current impasse.
- Calling it "more flexible" than the Michigan Education Trust launched by his predecessor, Governor John Engler announced the sale of **Michigan College Savings Bonds** as a new, tax-free way to save for children's school expenses. The bonds—a \$5-million portion of \$280 million in environmental cleanup notes being issued in June—may be purchased in \$1,000 or \$5,000 denominations with maturities ranging from 8 to 20 years. Unlike MET contracts, the bonds may be resold by the buyer any time before maturity and may be used for any purpose. The savings bond program will be administered by the MET office, which has not authorized the issue of any new prepaid college tuition contracts since Engler assumed office.
- Michigan's **congressional exodus** leads the nation, with Rep. Bob Davis (R-Gaylord) announcing this week that he would not seek an eighth term in the shell-shocked chamber confronting the greatest turnover—53 incumbents so far—since World War II. Davis is the sixth retiree from Michigan's delegation; Ohio and Pennsylvania, each with four announced congressional retirements, tie for second place in lost seniority among the states.
- At the state capitol, the list of **open legislative seats** also continues to lengthen. Rep. Gordon Sparks (R-Troy) announced his retirement after five terms, becoming the eleventh legislator to drop out of the '92 elections. Meanwhile, among the political newcomers announcing their races in advance of next week's filing deadline is one with a familiar ring: Thomas R. Truscott, father of gubernatorial press secretary John Truscott will run as a Republican in the 68th House District.