

## Michigan ROUNDUP

May 13, 1993

### *Legislative Week in Review*

- The biggest news about the **state budget** for 1993-94 and 1994-95 is what's *not* happening: no gridlock, little rancor, and mostly smooth sailing so far as the appropriations process moves toward the home stretch. Over Democratic objections, both chambers have been approving the department budgets in the biennial format submitted by the governor, subject to adjustment next year. The current fiscal year budget assumes increased revenues of 4.7 percent, somewhat below Public Sector Consultants' estimated revenue growth of 5.5 percent.
- A nine-bill package toughening **domestic violence** penalties passed on a series of unanimous votes in the House this week. A centerpiece of the package is HB 4325 defining the new crimes of simple and aggravated domestic assault and carrying tougher penalties for subsequent convictions. Another of the bills, HB 4362, permits arrests without a warrant in cases of violation of an abuse injunction by threatening to injure or kill the person named in the injunction.
- Insurers would be barred from making **genetic screening** tests a prerequisite for health or life insurance under HB 4398 passed by the House this week. The bill, which would make Michigan the fourth state to ban basing insurability on genetic testing, would list the tests as an unfair trade practice under the Michigan Insurance Code.
- Under the provisions of HB 4007, prisoners will no longer have extensions of the **statute of limitations** to cover the period of their incarceration. The measure was passed in the House after proponents argued that convicts' access to the legal system is no longer impeded, and that lawsuits filed after their imprisonment are difficult and expensive for the state to litigate.

### *Political News*

- Gov. John Engler got **good reviews** for two appearances this week. One viewer of Engler's televised Proposal A forum Tuesday night pronounced the governor's demeanor as "chummy." Meanwhile a *Detroit Free Press* columnist called Engler's impassioned fifteen-minute remarks opposing Michigan military facility closings one of his best-ever public performances. Joining the governor in offering testimony to the federal base-closing panel at Wayne State University were Michigan senators Carl Levin and Donald Riegler.
- Governor Engler got a **bad review** this week from U.S. Rep. John Dingell (D-Dearborn), legendary congressional investigator. According to the *Detroit News*, Dingell has sent Engler a pithy letter charging the state with improperly using a loophole to garner more than \$250 million in Medicaid funds for Michigan. Engler aides deny any abuse and promise full cooperation with the probe of the issue that Dingell has promised.
- Joining such other notable women as astronaut Sally Ride and actress Cicely Tyson is East Lansing business executive and fund-raiser **Faylene Owen**, who has been named to the President's Commission on White House Fellowships. Owen, who with her husband raised \$1.5 million for the Clinton presidential campaign in Michigan, replaces Ronna Romney on the panel. Owen's duties will begin later this month when the commission interviews 35 fellowship finalists.
- The chief of staff for former Congressman Carl Pursell has taken over as **deputy for public affairs** in the Michigan Governor's Office. William McBride began his new duties Tuesday and reports to chief of staff Dan Pero, whose spouse Colleen vacated the post to assume the presidency of the Michigan-Japan Foundation.
- A proposed **nuclear waste storage** plan using concrete casks near the Lake Michigan shore is the topic of a suit filed by the state with the U.S. Court of Appeals. A U.S. Circuit Court judge last week ruled that it lacked jurisdiction to block the planned waste disposal at Palisades Nuclear Facility near South Haven. Plaintiffs in the case allege that the 24 storage drums have not been adequately tested for outdoor use, especially in lake surroundings.
- Michigan's work force reached an all-time high in April when, for the first time in 25 years, the state's **unemployment rate** stayed below the national average for three consecutive months. F. Robert Edwards, director of the Michigan Employment Security Commission, reported last week. Michigan's jobless rate (6.6 percent) ranked fifth, behind New Jersey (9.1 percent), California (8.6 percent), Illinois (8.1 percent), and New York (7 percent). North Carolina boasted the lowest rate of unemployment, at 5.5 percent.