



Michigan ROUNDUP

....A new workers' compensation agreement was signed into law Thursday night by Governor Blanchard shortly after the House and Senate approved the conference report on SB 67. The old law expired midnight Thursday. The new law revises the definition of disability; restricts coordination of benefits only to workers injured after March 31, 1982, reversing the effects of a 1985 state supreme court decision; and makes it more difficult to sue an employer for damages by claiming intentional injury.

....The House approved a bill to raise the speed limit on rural interstate highways to 65 mph, but deleted a Senate-passed provision that would prohibit the use of radar detectors. Governor Blanchard has repeatedly supported a ban on radar detectors. The House added an amendment that would establish a task force to study the effects of the higher speed limit. The bill must now return to the Senate for concurrence in the House amendments. Senate Majority Leader John Engler believes that the Senate will accept the House version.

....A bill restricting the use of officeholder expense funds (OEFs) to purposes authorized in the Internal Revenue Service business expenditure rules unanimously passed the House. Officeholders would be allowed to purchase items such as furniture and computers for office use up to a \$1,500 annual limit, but could not purchase items such as cars, clothes, or gifts for constituents. The bill would allow the secretary of state to require officials to reimburse their OEFs for improper expenses.

....In a poll taken for Time magazine shortly after Gary Hart withdrew from the presidential campaign, 20% of those surveyed said that New York Governor Mario Cuomo would be their first choice as Democratic nominee for the presidency. Cuomo, who has insisted that he will not run for president, is followed by Reverend Jesse Jackson (11%), Senator Bill Bradley (10%), and Governor Michael Dukakis (8%). Only Dukakis has officially announced his candidacy. Vice-president George Bush's lead among Republicans and independents has slipped from 40% in January to 30%. Senator Robert Dole is second with 23%, followed by Senator Jack Kemp (7%), Alexander Haig (6%), and Reverend Pat Robertson (5%).

....The Michigan Department of Public Health's Task Force on Infant Mortality has recommended a five-year plan to reduce infant mortality in the state. The plan, which would target the 13 counties with the highest infant mortality rates, stresses making prenatal care available to more women, especially the poor; reducing unintended pregnancies; and providing care for more high-risk newborns.

....Speaker of the House Jim Wright (D-Texas) is expected to support the addition of coverage of prescription drugs to pending legislation on catastrophic health insurance for the elderly. Medicare does not currently cover prescription drugs taken outside the hospital. Health and Human Services secretary Otis Bowen's catastrophic illness proposal, which President Reagan supports, does not include such coverage.

....The Michigan Employment Security Commission announced that the state's unemployment rate rose from 8% in March to 8.6% in April. The nation's unemployment rate dropped to 6.3% from 6.6% in March. The April unemployment rate is the state's lowest for the month of April since 1979.