



*Public Sector Reports*

## Michigan ROUNDUP

### *Legislative Week in Review*

- Rep. Dennis Dutko (D-Warren), who pled guilty to two drunken driving offenses, began serving a one-year jail sentence this week. Dutko will not renounce his seat but says he will not seek reelection in 1990.
- During the House debate on the school finance reform plan (HJR I) proposed by the Harden coalition, various amendments were proposed but defeated. A vote is expected next week.
- A bill to allow ash from municipal incinerators to be disposed of in special landfill cells is on its way to the governor. Some environmental groups are urging a veto because the bill treats the ash as nontoxic, a possible violation of federal law.
- Governor Blanchard vetoed legislation (SB 119) that would have prohibited enforcement actions against retail liquor licensees who sell alcohol to minors unless the minor also were taken to court.
- Legislation allowing persons to execute "living wills" regarding the provision, withholding, or withdrawal of medical treatment was defeated in the House by a vote of 42-59. Blaming the Right to Life movement for the bill's defeat, its sponsor, Rep. Perry Bullard (D-Ann Arbor), said that organization "stomps on the rights of a million and a half people in this state."
- In a surprise move, the Senate concurred in the House-passed version of the Department of Social Services budget bill, sending the bill to the governor and bypassing the usual conference committee deliberations. The bill includes \$30.5 million more in general fund spending than recommended by the governor. Also included are the Job Start program and a two-percent increase in provider reimbursements, but all the governor's Medicaid cost-containment proposals are excluded. The House and Senate fiscal agencies estimate that the bill is underfunded by between \$100 million and \$180 million.
- The Senate approved a higher education budget that calls for a total of \$1,185 million in general fund spending, including grants and financial aid and excluding \$26 million in Research Excellence Fund monies that were transferred to the Department of Management and Budget. The allocation is \$37 million more than recommended by the governor, \$49 million more than estimated expenditures for FY 1988-89, and \$3 million less than passed by the House.

### *Political News*

- The *Detroit Free Press* reports a delay in the confirmation of Michigan Republican Peter Seccia as ambassador to Italy. A Senate staff member, who wishes to remain anonymous, indicates that the delay is designed to express misgivings about the appointment due to Seccia's regular displays of behavior inappropriate for a diplomat. This week the *New York Times* quoted an Italian newspaper, *La Repubblica*: "Nominating a notable businessman from the country, a personality who has no international experience and whose sole merits are that he filled the Bush election coffers and has an Italian surname, unfortunately reconfirms the lightness with which the superpower takes its relations with the small power, Italy." An earlier confirmation would have enabled Seccia to accompany President Bush to Italy this week.
- Attorney General Frank Kelley plans to take the issue of sobriety check lanes to the U. S. Supreme Court. The proposal, initiated by Governor Blanchard in 1986, called for the random stopping of motorists to check for signs of intoxication. The project was implemented only once, in May 1986, and was ruled unconstitutional by Wayne County Circuit Court Judge Michael Stacey. The ruling was upheld at the appellate level, and the Michigan high court has refused to hear the case. Kelley asserts that the "inconvenience and intrusion" caused by the check lanes is outweighed by their deterrence value.
- Under fire once again is the honoraria system. Recent financial reports indicate that Michigan's 18 U.S. representatives brought in \$280,000 in speaking fees in 1988. When averaged, this adds 17 percent to their annual salary of \$89,500. Much of the criticism stems from the acceptance of honoraria for speaking engagements provided by corporations with specific interest in a representative's vote.
- Amid talk that House Speaker Jim Wright may resign, Rep. John Dingell, considered a contender for the speakership, predicted that Majority Leader Tom Foley would seek the position and expressed his strong support for Foley. Dingell then might be considered for the Majority Leader post, but an aide says Dingell is not after the number two spot.
- The Michigan State Medical Society installed Dr. Robert Paxton, a Fremont family physician, as its new president. Paxton says he wants to work toward solutions to medical liability and cost-containment problems. Dr. Susan Hershberg Adelman, who was named president-elect, will be the first woman to preside over the society.

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