

Michigan **ROUNDUP**

June 3, 1993

Political News

- It was the best showing of any comparable ballot proposal in two decades, but in the end **Proposal A** suffered the same electoral fate as eleven other property tax or school finance reform measures brought forward since 1972. The proposal's outstate support—where it led 59-41 percent—was more than offset by opposition ranging from two-thirds to three-quarters of voters in Wayne, Macomb, and Oakland counties. The resulting vote pattern left the plan opposed by 54 percent of all voters, even as 68 counties supported Proposal A in a lightly attended election involving an estimated 30 percent of all registered voters. Other counties in the “no” column were Genesee, Washtenaw, Saginaw, and Bay. The proposal was energetically supported by Gov. John Engler and a wide range of interest groups backed by a \$1.6 million publicity campaign. Most political observers agreed that a general mistrust of government was a key reason for the measure's defeat.
- On another ballot issue, Detroit voters said “no” to **casino gambling** less emphatically than ever before. The 51-49 percent split on permitting legalized gaming in Detroit was the closest of the four ballots held on the issue over the past 17 years. Casino promoters, noting the planned gambling ventures elsewhere in the region—including neighboring Windsor, Ontario—vowed to push for a fifth referendum. Beyond the support of the Detroit community, casino gambling would require state legislative approval, thought by some to be an even more difficult prospect.
- In two legislative **primary races** Wednesday, Jackson Community College President Clyde LeTarte won the chance to oppose County Treasurer Janet Rochefort for the vacant 65th District seat. LeTarte was the odds-on favorite in a four-person race; Rochefort was unopposed. In Detroit's 3rd District, Mary Lou Parks led a long roster of Democratic contenders—including a son of the late Joe Young, Sr., who formerly held the seat. Parks's 1,843 vote total will match her in a special general election with Republican Curtis Jacobson, who was unopposed. Voting in the 3rd district primary was very light, with only 7,628 votes cast.
- As expected, Attorney General Frank Kelley has challenged the ruling overturning Michigan's **assisted suicide ban** as unconstitutional. Kelley has asked the state court of appeals to issue an emergency stay of last month's Wayne County Circuit Court ruling. If the appeals court sides with Kelley, prosecutors would again be able to charge people assisting in suicides with felonies punishable by up to four years' imprisonment and a \$2,000 fine.
- An Ingham County circuit court ruling released last week upheld Michigan State University's **presidential search process**. Judge James Giddings ruled that MSU's candidate review panel does not violate the state's Open Meetings Act and denied requests from the *Lansing State Journal* and *The Detroit News* that the committee be barred from interviewing and eliminating presidential candidates in private meetings.
- All 200 seats in the Lansing Law Building Auditorium were expected to be filled as the state supreme court began its deliberations on the **Baby Jessica custody case** Thursday. A single courtroom television camera will transmit proceedings to the auditorium audience in response to growing national interest in the contested adoption case between an Ann Arbor couple and the toddler's birth parents who have been awarded custody by another state's supreme court. The Michigan court's decision is expected sometime this summer.

Legislative Week in Review

- With attention riveted on voter reaction to Proposal A, the legislature was relatively quiet this week. Lawmaker now face the prospect of **reworking the 1993-94 budget**. Department of Management and Budget Director Patricia Woodworth told Gongwer New Service, “The whole budget has to be redone,” noting that the executive recommendation relied on millions in additional revenue for the new fiscal year based on the operational phasing of Proposal A. Governor Engler had already signed into law a 1993-94 school aid budget predicated on the ballot issue's passage. Absent a legislative alternative, homeowners will now face assessment hikes averaging 11 percent statewide, and in less than two weeks, several school districts will be taking proposed millage increases to their electorates.
- A bill authorizing the Department of Social Services to **recover overpayment** to former public assistance recipients was signed into law last week by Governor Engler. Supporters of Public Act 41 of 1993 (formerly HB 4299) say it could save upwards of \$30 million in recovered overpayments from closed cases.