

## Michigan ROUNDUP

June 11, 1993

### *Legislative Week in Review*

- Meeting this week with Gov. John Engler, top legislative leaders agreed there isn't time to enact **property tax relief** for state homeowners before their July 1 tax bills are mailed. Instead, the House co-Speakers and Senate majority and minority leaders agreed to remain in session until legislation was passed offering a break on December tax bills and until a new school funding plan is adopted to replace the school aid budget decimated by voter rejection of Proposal A. The legislative chambers earlier had set a target adjournment date of July 2; leaders now agree that schedule is obsolete and plan to spend much of the summer on what has become virtually a standing legislative agenda of property tax and school finance reform.
- Overshadowed in recent weeks by these tax and finance issues is another potential **legislative budget stalemate**. The Department of Mental Health (DMH) budget (HB 4544) remains firmly lodged in the House Appropriations Committee—the only House-originated budget not yet discharged from committee—in a fierce partisan battle. Democrats have pushed amendments reopening Detroit's Lafayette Clinic and limiting gubernatorial power to transfer line-item budget funds without legislative consent. House Republicans have steadfastly repelled the initiatives, while their colleagues on the Senate Appropriations Committee this week reported out their own version of the 1993–94 DMH appropriation in the form of SB 446.
- Much to the Senate's outrage, the Cobo Hall refinancing bill (SB 537) removed from the governor's desk by the Senate Republican majority last month in an attempt to squeeze out sufficient Democratic votes to give **immediate effect** to previously passed auto insurance reform legislation (HB 4156) turned up this week in the secretary of state's office as Public Act 58. Gongwer News Service reports that the issuance of a public act number over the upper chamber's objections "threatens to unleash a rare court fight between two branches of government as well as complicate the already tangled negotiations over automobile no-fault insurance." In support of the secretary of state's action, a spokesman for the attorney general has cited several precedents, including a state supreme court ruling that legislation cannot be removed from the governor's desk without action of both chambers. Officers of the Senate retort that in at least three instances since 1987 bills have been recalled by the action of one house. Meanwhile, another vote on immediate effect for HB 4156, as well as a vote on the "hostage," SB 537, could be scheduled next week.
- With one Republican defection, a **campaign finance** bill that critics charge unfairly protects the incumbent governor eked out passage 20-15 in the Senate this week. SB 595 would prevent candidates from counting out-of-state contributions in qualifying for state matching campaign funds. Democrats charge that the measure is aimed primarily at deterring Sen. Debbie Stabenow (D-Lansing), whose gubernatorial precampaigning has attracted funding from a national women's organization. Republicans deny the charge, suggesting that the measure would prevent nationally known Governor Engler—who received more than 200 out-of-state contributions in 1990—from receiving even more such funding in 1994.
- Budgets for the departments of **Corrections and Public Health** won Senate approval this week. The public health appropriation bill, HB 4544, passed 20-16 with an amendment transferring nearly \$1 million in AIDS education funding to programs supporting Alzheimer's disease registration and cancer and heart disease prevention. HB 4545, the corrections budget, also passed 20-16 after an amendment removed a program permitting some parolees to complete their required check-ins by mail.

### *Political News*

- "Detroit losing its once-potent Lansing clout," was the *Detroit Free Press* headline on a two-part story this week detailing the city's waning fortunes in the state capital. So-called equity funding supporting such regional cultural institutions as the Detroit Institute of Arts, the Detroit Zoo, and the Detroit Symphony has shrunk from \$38 million annually in 1989 to \$21.8 million in 1993, according to the *Free Press*, which also noted state legislative attrition from a high of 9 Detroit senators and 24 representatives in the 1960s to the current low of 5 Detroit senators and 13 representatives.
- The number of property assessment appeals to the **Michigan Tax Tribunal** could exceed 40,000 by this session's June 30 deadline. Norman Shinkle, chief judge of the seven-justice panel, told the *Detroit News* that appeals are arriving at a record pace and are expected to increase with the defeat of Proposal A, which would have capped this year's increases.