



Michigan ROUNDUP

Legislative Week in Review

- Long-stalled FY 1990–91 **budget negotiations** resumed Wednesday, prompting a gubernatorial spokesperson to predict a possible compromise package by the weekend. Midweek talks between House Speaker Lew Dodak and Budget Director Patti Woodworth expanded to include Governor John Engler and Senator Majority Leader Dick Posthumus. The Michigan Court of Appeals likely provided new impetus for the negotiations: An appellate panel last week continued an injunction barring the governor from using the State Administrative Board to approve fund transfers without legislative approval. Meanwhile, both sides speculated that any forthcoming budget settlement would not address funding for general assistance welfare, the most controversial partisan issue separating negotiators.
- A firm party-line vote propelled a revision to the state's **capital acquisition deduction (CAD)** out of the House Taxation Committee and onto the chamber floor yesterday. The measure, HB 4931, replaces the CAD language in Michigan's single business tax that was struck down earlier this year in a state court ruling. The Democrat-backed bill would sunset in three years, by which time the courts are expected to have resolved pending questions of applicability. Republicans and business groups strenuously object both to the interim nature of the bill and to the formula weightings used in computing the deduction. The House is scheduled to vote on the measure next week.
- Years of legislative debate about restricting **off-road vehicle (ORV)** use culminated this week in Senate passage of HR 181, which establishes an official statewide ORV trail plan. The plan was mandated in earlier legislation limiting use to specifically designated trails in the Lower Peninsula; ORV use in the Upper Peninsula is not regulated by these measures.
- The House approved and sent to the Senate late last week two bills expanding **grandparents' visitation rights** with grandchildren in cases involving divorce or death of parents. HBs 4793–4 extend rights available to grandparents under existing statutes, including cases in which the grandchildren's parents are not married and when visitation has been denied in retaliation for reporting abuse or neglect.
- Legislation creating a **health professionals disciplinary board (HB 4729)** to oversee the sanction-imposing function currently assigned to separate licensing or regulatory bodies was signed into law by the governor this week. Public Act 39 vests the new board with authority to require substance abuse tests and mental and physical competence exams for potential registrants.
- The Senate has announced a **summer schedule** providing shortened sessions every two weeks beginning June 27 at 10 a.m. The chamber plans to convene again on July 11 and 25 and August 8 and 22. Regular sessions will resume on September 10.

Political News

- Senator John Schwarz (R-Battle Creek) and Department of Management and Budget Director Patti Woodworth were **married Saturday** in Chicago.
- A special task force to review **civil rights protections for mental health consumers** has been established by Mental Health Department Director James Haveman. The eleven-member review panel will include representatives of the governor's office and the departments of Corrections and Mental Health. Haveman has charged the group with developing recommendations for his consideration by August 1.
- Lieutenant Governor Connie Binsfeld cast her first **tie-breaking vote** as the Senate's presiding officer this week. A hotly contested bill shielding physicians and other health professionals from malpractice suits arising from emergency situations, SB 268, received an 18–18 tie vote that Binsfeld resolved by supporting the measure. The legislation has stirred controversy in the Senate—which already had rescinded previously approved amendments in the bill—and faces an uncertain future in the House, where a similar measure died in the 1989–90 legislative session.
- A steady decline in state **unemployment claims** has ended Michigan's participation in a program paying extended benefits to jobless workers. Financed by state and federal funds, the thirteen additional weeks of payments were available in Michigan from March 11 through May 25, when the claims volume fell below levels required for the state to remain in the program. Some 48,000 jobless Michiganians received the extra payments. The program cannot be triggered again for a minimum of thirteen weeks.
- Representative Michael Bouchard (R-Birmingham) held his slender victory margin over Representative Gordon Sparks (R-Troy) in a **primary election recount** this week for the vacant 16th Senate District seat they both sought. Sparks requested the recount in precincts where the number of persons visiting the polls and the total number of votes cast apparently differed considerably. Fourteen precincts were involved in the review, the results of which confirmed a 373-vote plurality for Bouchard.



Public Sector Consultants, Inc.

Knapp's Centre • 300 S. Washington Sq. • Suite 401
Lansing, MI 48933-2134 • (517) 484-4954