

Michigan ROUNDUP

June 18, 1993

Legislative Week in Review

- House and Senate leadership met again this week with Gov. John Engler to hammer out a consensus on **FY 1993-94 spending ceilings**. Voter rejection of Proposal A created a ripple effect extending beyond the school aid budget and likely requiring cuts in most state department budgets that have already moved through the chambers on their way to conference committees.
- In an active legislative week, three **FY 1993-94 agency budget bills** won passage. On a 98-1 vote, the House passed SB 529, a \$31 million general fund budget for the Department of Military Affairs. The Senate voted 20-16 to approve HB 4540, which authorizes a \$1.3 billion budget for higher education, and also passed a Department of Education budget of nearly \$811 million on a 20-15 vote on HB 4463. The community colleges bill passed the Senate last week; HB 4538 appropriates \$240 million in general funds for both 1993-94 and 1994-95 and passed on a 20-13 vote, reflecting solid Democratic disapproval of two-year budget bills.
- A package of bills potentially enabling the **privatizing of state prisons** passed the upper chamber this week over Democratic objections that incarceration is a governmental power inappropriate for delegation to private contractors. SBs 273-275 would permit the state to contract the management and operation of one of three new prisons built but not yet opened to a private firm under a pilot program. Under the legislation, outside vendors would have to save at least 10 percent over the state's cost in running the facility.
- The distance between children and tobacco smoke increased in the House this week with passage of measures banning **smoking in childcare facilities**. Without opposition, the lower chamber passed HBs 4688-4690, which outlaw smoking in day care centers and group homes when children are present. After-hours smoking by adults in these facilities would be permitted only if the children's parents are informed of the practice.
- There was less unanimity in the House on another child welfare measure this week. Drivers who fail to keep their **children buckled up** would face a primary motor vehicle offense. At present, seatbelt use violations are a secondary offense in Michigan. HB 4511 toughens the statutes for children age 16 and under in a moving vehicle and passed 55-44, with critics charging the measure invites motorist harassment by police officers.
- Supporters of SB 257 argued successfully that the state's **natural resources statutes** are characterized by contradictory definitions and conflicting regulatory requirements. The Senate passed the measure recodifying the statutes without debate on a 34-2 vote. Gongwer News Service reports that laws affected by the proposed recodification include those governing conservation officers, drinking water, water resource protection, wastewater disposal, littering, pesticide and air pollution controls, underground storage tanks, hazardous waste management, recycling, and the Clean Michigan Fund.
- Governor Engler visited a local school last week to sign into law public acts 59 and 60 enacting **teacher tenure reform**. The new legislation extends the probationary period for new teachers and streamlines dismissal hearing proceedings for tenured teachers by requiring them to be held before a state administrative law judge.

Political News

- Citing "economic devastation," four Michigan congressmen urged sparing three state **defense facilities** in testimony Tuesday before the eight-member federal Base Closure and Realignment Committee. U.S. Reps. Bart Stupak (D-Menominee) and Nick Smith (R-Addison) joined Sens. Donald Riegle (D-Flint) and Carl Levin (D-Detroit) in urging the panel to reconsider its recommendations to close K. I. Sawyer Air Force Base in Marquette, along with a Naval Air Facility in Mt. Clemens and a defense logistics facility in Battle Creek. Some observers opine that Sawyer may be dropped from the closure list, in part because of predictions that local unemployment rates would soar to 24 percent if it is shut down.
- The June 15 deadline for **House Fiscal Agency** director candidates drew nearly 120 applications for the position currently held by interim administrator Robert McKerr, whose contract expires July 31.
- Vice President Al Gore made a weekend stop in Detroit to top the guest list at a fund-raiser for U.S. Sen. Donald Riegle that organizers hoped would raise \$400,000 toward a race expected to be very competitive and expensive. Some pundits have labeled Riegle as one of the Senate's most vulnerable incumbents and suggest that his campaign war chest needs to approximate \$5 million.