



Michigan ROUNDUP

September 12, 1991

Legislative Week in Review

- After meeting only four times since its June recess, the legislature returned to **fall session** yesterday, beginning a schedule that will run through December. In addition to resolving the 1991-92 budget, lawmakers are expected to address issues of legislative reapportionment, property tax reform, automobile insurance rates, and discrimination at private clubs.
- Ending a long and rancorous standoff, with only three weeks remaining until the new fiscal year, House Democrats and the Engler administration on Tuesday announced agreement on **199-92 budget guidelines**. The pact involves a \$7.9 billion spending package that exceeds revenue estimates by some \$400 million, virtually ensuring that one-shot revenue boosts as well as gubernatorial vetoes (almost certainly in Social Services) will be necessary to balance the final spending plan. Under the agreement, House and Senate conferees will report their budget bills to their respective chambers by September 23 to allow legislative and executive action prior to the new fiscal year on October 1. Crucial to the bipartisan agreement was Governor Engler's written assurance that he would not ask the State Administrative Board to make any fund transfers until the Michigan Supreme Court rules on the board's authority. House Speaker Lew Dodak (D-Taymouth Township) made final budget negotiations contingent on this gubernatorial guarantee.
- Returning legislators welcomed two **new House members** at Wednesday's swearing-in ceremonies. Georgina Goss (R-Northville) represents the 36th District, replacing Gerald Law; John Jamian (R-Bloomfield Township) represents the 65th District, replacing freshman Michael Bouchard who is now in the Senate.

Political News

- Governor Engler used Wednesday's packed joint opening session of the legislature to unveil the text of his **school improvement plan**, titled "Michigan 2000." Engler's twenty-minute speech called for education reforms including creation of nontraditional schools, revisions in teacher certification and tenure regulations, and more kindergarten hours for at-risk students. The speech received considerable advance publicity, which focused on Engler's proposed "Michigan Education Warranty": Employers finding education deficiencies in new graduates would remand them back to their high schools for remediation at the schools' expense. "It's time we made sure that the future for every student includes a diploma and a paycheck, not food stamps and a welfare check," Engler said in a text that also acknowledged predecessor James Blanchard's commitment to education excellence in the state. Cost estimates for implementing the governor's proposals approximate \$55 million in the first year, a sum Engler says can be funded from existing revenues. The governor announced formation of a statewide Michigan 2000 committee to follow up on his plan, and he invited the legislative leadership (Sens. Posthumus and Miller, Reps. Dodak and Hillemonds) to serve with him on the group.
- The **Engler recall** petition drive appears dead: The state Bureau of Elections announced this week that fewer than 300,000 valid signatures had been turned in; more than 640,000 are required to mandate a special election.
- **Licensing and Regulation** exists no more as a separate state department; effective September 1 its functions were subsumed within the Commerce Department. Former L&R Director Kathy Wilbur will head the Bureau of Occupational and Professional Regulation in the Commerce Department.
- In recent gubernatorial appointments, the eight-member **Michigan Civil Rights Commission** has six new members, subject to Senate confirmation: Hatim Attalla, Dearborn; Archie L. Hayman, Flint; Harry G. Hutchinson, Lathrup Village; Arthur Lombard, Grosse Pointe Farms; Laura Reyes-Kopack, Livonia; and Edgar Vann, Jr., Detroit. Meantime, Gov. Engler has announced most members of the new **Council for Arts and Cultural Affairs**, which replaced the Michigan Council for the Arts on September 1. Two of the fifteen new members have not yet accepted their appointment; the others are: Ken Beachler, East Lansing; Maxine DeBruyn, Zeeland; Betsy DeVos, Grand Rapids; Lora Frankel, Huntington Woods; Mike Ilitch, Bloomfield Hills; Roger Jacobi, Fife Lake; Shahida Maudi, Detroit; Nora Mendoza, West Bloomfield; D. Joseph Olson, Howell; Judy Rapanos, Midland; Howard Sims, Detroit; Eileen Weiser, Ann Arbor; and Ima Williams, Harbor Springs.
- The White House announced this week the nomination of David McKeague as **U.S. District Judge** for Michigan's western district. A Lansing attorney since 1971 and legal counsel for the state Republican Party, McKeague will succeed Douglas Hillman, pending U.S. Senate confirmation of the lifetime appointment.
- The Natural Resources Commission today voted 6-1 to appoint Roland "Rolli" Harnes as **DNR director**. The appointment surprised many observers who thought the commission likely would defer to the wish of the governor and the Senate that a selection wait until after the September 24 Senate confirmation hearings for three new commission members. Gov. Engler also was said to favor more aggressive recruitment of outside candidates for the post. Harnes, currently chief of the department's Real Estate Division, was one of four leading candidates, all internal, including Acting Director Del Rector.