



Public Sector Reports

Michigan ROUNDUP

Legislative Week in Review

■ The House began the fall legislative session Wednesday in its crowded, temporary chambers in the Roosevelt Building. The Senate returns Wednesday, September 27. Dominating the House debate Wednesday was controversial "living will" legislation that would allow people to declare in writing the type of medical care they want should they become terminally ill and unable to participate in medical treatment decisions. The bill also would grant immunity from liability to health care providers who follow the will of the patient. A vote on the bill was held up due to opposition from the Right to Life of Michigan.

■ Several key issues are likely to receive attention from the legislature this fall.

Abortion Governor Blanchard is calling for legislation to exempt from the ban on Medicaid abortions those pregnancies in which the mother's health is at risk or those resulting from rape or incest. On the antiabortion side, legislation has been introduced to require parental consent for teenagers seeking an abortion, prohibit hospitals from performing abortions, and eliminate health insurance coverage for state employees' abortions. The parental consent bill, a high priority of the Right to Life of Michigan, is expected to pass the Senate in October; if passed by the House, there is a strong possibility it will be vetoed by the governor.

Auto Insurance Three proposals designed to reduce and control the cost of auto insurance in Michigan will vie for attention. Two would mandate rollbacks in premiums. The proposals will be debated by the House Insurance Committee chaired by Rep. Mary Brown (D-Kalamazoo), who says action is not expected until November.

Drugs The governor is urging passage of antidrug and anticrime measures, including mandating life in prison without parole for repeat violent offenders and for serious crimes, providing for court-supervised wiretapping to investigate major drug dealers, establishing multicounty grand juries, establishing criminal sentencing guidelines, providing judicial grants of immunity for witnesses in drug cases, and creating "drug-free school zones."

Education Measures linked to school finance ballot proposals and intended to improve the quality of K-12 education will be considered.

Campaign finance reform and solid waste disposal will be debated.

Political News

■ House Minority Leader Paul Hillegonds (R-Holland) has asked House Speaker Lewis Dodak (D-Saginaw) to create a "bipartisan special committee to investigate and recommend what action is appropriate for the House to take" concerning the refusal of Rep. Dennis Dutko (D-Warren) to resign his House seat. Dutko, who is serving a jail sentence for drunken driving convictions, said he would resign September 15 but changed his mind.

■ Republican U.S. Representative William Schuette of Sanford announced his candidacy for the U.S. Senate seat held by Democrat Carl Levin. Levin is expected to seek his third six-year term in the fall of 1990. Schuette will face Republican Clark Durant III, a Detroit attorney, in next August's Republican primary. Former Republican Congressman James Dunn and state Representative Sid Ouwinga (R-Marion) also may enter the race.

■ The Michigan Supreme Court Wednesday refused to review a 1988 Court of Appeals decision that declared the **Accident Fund**, a workers' compensation insurer, a state agency rather than a private insurance company. The court's refusal may bring to an end a ten-year controversy. Attorney General Frank Kelley said the state insurance commissioner will be told what steps to take to assert jurisdiction over the fund. Meanwhile, Accident Fund executives are examining their options.

■ The Prosecuting Attorney's Association of Michigan asserts that life in Michigan prisons is more like a vacation than punishment. Wayne County Prosecutor John O'Hair, head of the association, said, "The prison system doesn't have to be inhuman, but we want people to serve a consequence. Right now they're sitting around, watching TV, socializing." Gail Light, spokesperson for the Michigan Department of Corrections, attributes the problem to overcrowded prisons and too few jobs for prisoners.

■ The Michigan Department of Education has made the **Michigan Education Assessment Program (MEAP) reading tests** more difficult. David Donovan, assistant state superintendent, says that the new test is more challenging because of the changing needs of employers. The new test places emphasis on comprehension and problem solving, as opposed to recall, previously the focus of MEAP reading tests.

■ **Robert Mitchell**, chief deputy director of the Michigan Department of Transportation, will become the new director of the Michigan Department of Agriculture on October 1. He succeeds Dr. Paul Kindinger.