

Michigan ROUNDUP

October 1, 1992

Legislative Week in Review

- With all 110 seats up for reelection, the **House recessed** Wednesday to hit the campaign trail; lawmakers in the Senate will remain in session through next week. Both chambers are expected to reconvene on November 5.
- In action seen as victory for right-to-life forces, the House reinstated Michigan's **parental consent** law. By a 69-35 vote, lawmakers clarified the definition of a "medical emergency," a statutory provision ruled unconstitutionally vague by a state court this summer. With pro-life supporters pushing for a pre-election vote on the measure, Wednesday's passage of HB 6099, which restored the prohibition against minors receiving abortions without parental consent or judicial waiver, withstood more than two dozen amendments to broaden exceptions to parental consent.
- The Senate voted on its own emotionally charged issue Wednesday, in the form of a **wiretap bill**, broadened to permit its use in cases of suspected bribery of public officials as well as in investigations of illegal drugs. SB 440, passed along with ten other anticrime measures, would permit police to obtain a 30-day, court-ordered wiretap, with an optional 60-day renewal.
- Two House-approved **legislative ethics bills** now head for the Senate, where the upper chamber has its own set of proposed reforms under consideration. HB 6080, passed without dissent, would create a bipartisan, five-member commission in each chamber to recommend a code of ethics within six months of the bill's passage. Another unanimous vote passed HB 6086, a measure banning legislators from receiving pay for a speech or public appearance. It would not bar officeholders from reimbursement for travel, meals, and lodging.
- The House and Senate appropriations committees approved fund transfers permitting several state departments to **meet payrolls** this week. Nearly \$16.5 million were shifted to permit some 1,600 state police and mental health employees, among others, to receive uninterrupted paychecks.

Political News

- Political pundits are divided on the impact of Ross Perot's reentry into the presidential race. Many agree with Gov. John Engler, who stated, "I don't think it's going to determine the outcome of the election."
- A Wayne County Circuit Court judge issued an **arrest warrant** Thursday for Department of Mental Health Director James Haveman. Haveman is charged with contempt of court for violating an order banning service cutbacks at Detroit's Lafayette Clinic.
- A "**Social Contract**" alternative to traditional welfare programs that is unique in the nation began in Michigan Thursday. Under the program, for which the Engler administration received federal waivers this summer, new applicants for state welfare are asked to sign a contract committing them to spend at least 20 hours weekly at work, in school, or in community volunteer work. The program phases in to include existing welfare recipients next April. Those who refuse to sign will be referred to the state's already crowded job skills training program; those refusing that referral could lose about \$100 in monthly benefits.
- An editorial in last week's *Wall Street Journal* saluted Governor Engler's proposed **privatizing of government** services as a "profile in real courage." This week, however, about 1,000 state employees and their supporters rallied against recommendations of a task force soon to submit its interim report to the governor. "They call it 'downsizing'; I call it capsizing," Michigan Corrections Organization Director Fred Parks told the noon-hour crowd. Meanwhile, the House Labor Committee has created a special subcommittee to review proposals to privatize services, virtually all of which would require legislative approval.
- A 4-3 Michigan Supreme Court ruling this week will change **school aid distribution**, but experts are not yet in agreement on the net effects for local districts. On the one hand, the high court ruled that the state is not obligated to help school districts pay their employees' social security taxes—a \$440 million annual tab statewide. On the other hand, the court would require some adjustments to the current practice of "recapture"—a mechanism for reducing state payments to out-of-formula districts for specific programs in order to redirect the funds to poorer districts. The ruling interpreted the Headlee amendment to the state constitution as requiring the state to pay the same percentage of mandated categorical program costs to each district as it paid statewide for the programs in 1979. The issue has been referred back to the state court of appeals, which will determine how to apply the ruling.