



Michigan ROUNDUP

October 10, 1991

Legislative Week in Review

- Insiders are predicting that Governor John Engler's budget vetoes in the FY 1991-92 spending package sent to him by the legislature may total upward of \$125 million. The statutory deadline for gubernatorial action on the measures is Monday.
- A Department of Social Services **supplemental funding** bill approved last week by the Senate Appropriations Committee has been shelved by the full chamber pending the governor's action on the main spending plan, now before him. The supplemental bill would restore some of the most hotly contested DSS cuts. Meantime, attorneys for the state's poor have requested an injunction against ending the general assistance welfare program, arguing that the state failed to give proper notice of its termination to recipients.
- As expected, Gov. Engler signed into law the **tax-base sharing plan** (HB 4267) that redistributes some property tax revenues among the state's richest and poorest school districts. The governor also recently signed SB 459 retaining the Michigan Occupational Safety and Health Act, which would have expired on September 30.
- Local governments may charge up to five dollars to cover expenses of **pistol permits** under terms of HB 4816, passed by the Senate this week.

Political News

- This weekend features a **gubernatorial birthday**: John Engler will be forty-three years old on Saturday. Some fifteen hundred well-wishers are expected to offer early congratulations at a hundred-dollar-a-plate Lansing Center fund-raiser on Thursday.
- First Lady Michelle Engler will head the **Michigan Community Service Commission**. The new state commission, created by her husband last week, aims at encouraging volunteerism; this is in accord with a commitment in the governor's State of the State message that he and the first lady would personally involve themselves with community groups.
- Michigan's U.S. senators are strongly opposed to Judge Clarence Thomas's **Supreme Court appointment**—regardless of the outcome of the sexual harassment allegation. Quoted in the *Detroit News*, Sen. Donald Riegle said, "I cannot find a single highly distinguishing aspect in Mr. Thomas's modest legal career that would warrant his serious consideration for the Supreme Court." Senator Carl Levin was quoted as saying, "Judge Thomas's extreme rhetoric for ten years leaves me in genuine doubt as to whether he has the temperament necessary to weigh complicated constitutional rights of our people and to balance powers between the branches of government."
- Following word of a likely \$6.8 million cut in state aid to the **Detroit Institute of Arts**, museum administrators traded salvos with state executive branch officials. First, DIA leaders announced tentative plans to close on weekdays and cancel educational programs. The governor's chief of staff, press secretary, and budget director reacted sharply, characterizing the announcement as an ill-advised political tactic and suggesting that the entire state subsidy would be eliminated if the DIA's operations were so radically curtailed. Budget Director Patricia Woodworth publicly requested the museum's financial records; DIA Director Sam Sachs countered by asserting that the museum's records already are public and have been inspected by Woodworth and her staff.
- The Michigan Supreme Court announced last week that it will hear the state's **capital acquisition deduction** case; oral arguments are scheduled for December. Original provisions of the levy were rejected by the state court of appeals last year in a decision that some predicted could cost the state \$1 billion. Lawmakers subsequently revised the CAD, making it revenue neutral for the next two years.
- Department of Social Services chief Gerald Miller has named as **deputy DSS director** a thirty-year department veteran, Edward P. Roth. Ross joined DSS as a caseworker in 1960; since 1989 he has served as inspector general.
- The former director of the state Low-Level Radioactive Waste Authority regains visibility this week as **deputy director** of the Department of Natural Resources. Former DNR staff member James Cleary left a fifteen-year tenure at the department to take the radioactive waste post in 1988.
- A recent *New York Times* profile calls Michigan Congressman John Dingell the capital's "grand inquisitor." Known and feared for his relentless investigations into allegations of corporate and government wrongdoing, the powerful Dearborn Democrat told the *Times* that his main goal is not to humble people but to ferret out abuses. "Those who are doing things wrong enough to attract the attention of the [Energy and Commerce] committee are usually fairly important, prominent, well-to-do people. We have never done anything to threaten an honest researcher," Dingell said.

