



Michigan ROUNDUP

Political News

- At the site of next Monday's **presidential debate**, more than 5,000 Michigan State University students have signed up for tickets, to be awarded through a lottery and confirmed following a security check. Negotiations with debate commission officials over the number of student seats speeded up after MSU Interim President Gordon Guyer proposed to withdraw the campus debate site unless a minimum of 300 student seats was provided. Additional student seating will be available in Breslin Student Events Center, where oversized television screens will be installed.
- Parties to a year-long feud over powers of the **State Administrative Board (SAB)** presented arguments before the Michigan Supreme Court this week. The lawsuit was filed by House Speaker Lewis N. Dodak (D-Taymouth Township) to protest Gov. John Engler's use of the SAB to approve budget-balancing fund transfers. The most controversial transfer eliminated funding for general assistance welfare. Lower courts have split on the question, with a circuit court finding for defendants (the Engler administration) and a court of appeals ruling favoring Dodak and the other plaintiffs.
- The 1993-94 **salaries for elected officials** are set for review next week when the State Officers Compensation Commission convenes to make recommendations due to the legislature by December 31. The commission's proposals are implemented unless they are specifically rejected by the legislature. Such a rejection occurred for the first time in the commission's history in 1991, when state budget stringencies and layoffs prompted lawmakers to turn down raises for themselves. The commission sets pay levels for legislators, supreme court justices, lieutenant governor, and governor. Despite the 1991 freeze, Michigan officials' salaries are still relatively high: Michigan legislators' wages are fourth highest in the nation, with governor and lieutenant governor ranked seventh and supreme court justices coming in sixth nationally.
- Michigan hospitals pay the highest **medical malpractice insurance rates** in the nation, according to a report issued by the Michigan Hospital Association, Michigan State Medical Society, and Michigan Association of Osteopathic Physicians and Surgeons. According to the study, the average annual malpractice premium per hospital bed in metropolitan Detroit, is \$8,600 compared with a statewide average of \$5,700 and a national average of \$1,300. According to the *Detroit News*, the Michigan Trial Lawyers Association is "less than impressed by the study," seeing it as propaganda in support of a medical liability reform package currently stalled in the state House.
- Amidst the swirl of claims and counterclaims on the merits of the four state **ballot proposals** awaiting voters on November 3, former Gov. George Romney has announced a change of heart on Proposal B, which would limit terms of public office. Former co-chairman of Michigan Citizens against Term Limits, Romney has broken ranks with fellow ex-governors Milliken and Swainson and now says he'll work to support term limits. Michigan is one of thirteen states offering voters a term-limitation proposal.
- Widespread speculation has another former governor—Jim Blanchard—in line for a top **presidential appointment** if his close friend and longtime confidant Gov. Bill Clinton takes the White House. *The Washington Post* last week published campaign gossip earlier reported in *Newsweek* magazine: Blanchard, co-director of Clinton's Michigan campaign, is rumored to be a strong early favorite for a Clinton White House chief of staff.
- Michigan's incumbent congressional delegates are receiving record levels of **political action committee contributions**, according to the Associated Press. Federal election reports show that the state's eleven incumbent candidates received a total of \$2.8 million by mid-July, about double the total received for their previous campaigns. Trenton Democrat John Dingell led in PAC contributions with nearly \$647,000 reported. Other House incumbents received the following amounts: Bonior (D-Mt. Clemens), \$543,000; Levin (D-Southfield), \$403,000; Ford (D-Ypsilanti), \$283,000; Kildee (D-Flint), \$216,000; Carr (D-East Lansing), \$212,000; Camp (R-Midland), \$134,000; Conyers (D-Detroit), \$130,000; Upton (R-St. Joseph), \$71,000; Collins (D-Detroit), \$55,000; Henry (R-Grand Rapids), \$26,000.