



Michigan ROUNDUP

October 17, 1991

Legislative Week in Review

- Legislative committees were busy, but floor action was light this week as the effect of last week's \$119-million gubernatorial budget vetoes continued to dominate capitol news. Key developments on this front include:
 - Ranking Republicans announced a plan to **boycott** two House Appropriations Committee hearings scheduled to discuss the effect of the vetoes. House Minority Leader Paul Hillemonds (R-Holland) told Gongwer's News Service that the proposed hearings were mostly "political theater, with very little problem solving."
 - While both chambers still expect to consider a **supplemental appropriation** bill to restore funding in some areas cut by Governor John Engler's vetoes, such consideration was delayed in the Senate this week while lawmakers sought to familiarize themselves with the detail of departmental budgets.
 - On Wednesday, the state **court of appeals** established a fast-track schedule for considering whether the Engler administration-ordered demise of general assistance (GA) welfare violates the due process rights of Michigan's poor. An Ingham County Circuit Court ruling last week that ordered the GA program reinstated on the ground that the state provided inadequate notice of termination was stayed by the appellate panel pending its own review.
- The Senate passed three **reapportionment** measures this week on strict party-line votes, reflecting partisan differences that ultimately will send the issues to conference committees. SB 546, SR 277, and HCR 366 advance the Republican-run upper chamber's view that preserving municipal boundaries is less important than maximizing the number of minority-controlled districts. Democrats complain that this approach will cost seats for their party, which historically has been more sensitive to minority issues. Both political parties have lawsuits pending on redistricting issues.
- The Senate and House have announced their **session schedule** through Thanksgiving. The House will meet weekly through November 22, when it recesses until December 2. The Senate will recess on November 21 until December 3 and has set a December 5 deadline for adopting conference committee reports and acting on House-initiated bills.

Political News

- Bank official John Gernaat led a **crowded primary field** in the special election held Tuesday to fill the 18th House District vacancy left by former Rep. Sidney Ouwinga's death last summer. Gernaat defeated twelve other Republican contenders for the right to face lone Democrat Jo McLachlan in a November 26 contest for the seat representing Osceola, Wexford, Missaukee, Clare, and Lake counties.
- Democratic presidential aspirants likely will make a Detroit pilgrimage next month for the **national AFL-CIO convention**, scheduled midmonth at the Renaissance Center. According to the *Detroit Free Press*, Russian republic president Boris Yeltsin also has been invited, although neither he nor the six declared Democratic candidates have confirmed attendance plans. Conspicuously uninvited, the *Free Press* reports, is U.S. Secretary of Labor Lynn Martin, who in the view of the 14.2-million-member union's leadership, has not been effective.
- In its newest incarnation, the state's **arts council** awarded \$1 million in grants this week, withholding the remaining \$3 million of its allotment to consider further who should receive it. Among arts groups that are likely candidates are the state's 31 symphony orchestras, which lost virtually all their state subsidy in gubernatorial vetoes last week. The newly appointed Michigan Council for the Arts and Cultural Affairs begins operations under chair Judy Rapanos with a state budget roughly half that of its predecessor organization, the Michigan Council for the Arts. Against this backdrop, the council's longtime executive director, Barbara Goldman, resigned this week.
- A second **top deputy** in the Department of Natural Resources was replaced this week by new director Roland Harnes. Michael Moore has been named to replace Jack Bails as deputy director for resource management. Bails will supervise DNR operations in the southern third of the state. Last week Harnes replaced former acting director Delbert Rector with James Cleary as deputy director. Rector becomes chief DNR administrative officer.
- The Michigan Board of Education hopes to name a new **state superintendent** by mid-December to succeed Donald Bemis, who resigned after the once-Democratic board shifted to Republican control. A list of finalists scheduled for public interviews is expected by December 6.
- Following through on their previously announced positions, both of Michigan's Democratic U.S. senators voted **against confirmation** of Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas. According to the Gannett News Service, senators Carl Levin and Donald Riegle said they stuck with their earlier decision based on Thomas's legal qualifications rather than the allegations of sexual harassment. Riegle's office staff said calls there ran 966 for and 410 against Thomas's confirmation. Messages in Levin's office ran three to one in Thomas's favor, staff said.

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