



Public Sector Reports

Michigan ROUNDUP

Legislative Week in Review

- The Senate Committee on Human Resources and Senior Citizens approved by a 4-1 vote a bill requiring teenagers to obtain parental consent for an abortion. The bill is expected to be voted on by the full Senate early next week. Sen. John Cherry (D-Mt. Morris), who supports requiring parental consent, voted against the bill because he says it is written in such a way as to prohibit teenagers from using birth control pills or intrauterine devices. His amendment to exempt these forms of birth control was defeated. Sen. Jack Welborn (R-Kalamazoo), the bill's sponsor, said it was never his intent to ban use of the pill or IUDs, and he will work with Cherry in developing alternative language. Right to Life of Michigan supports the current language because it opposes use of the "morning-after" pill—used to stop pregnancy during the first six days after intercourse—and the IUD, which it contends can abort a fetus.
- Partners Against Crime, a 24-member group of state law enforcement officials appointed by the governor, proposed 13 initiatives to fight drug-related crimes. Governor Blanchard singled out four of the proposals as legislative priorities: mandating life sentences without parole for repeat violent offenders, creating multicounty grand juries, allowing the state to seize the profits of illegal enterprises, and permitting electronic surveillance in drug cases if authorized by the courts.
- The governor's appointment of Larry Meyer to succeed Doug Ross as director of the Department of Commerce was not opposed by the Senate Government Operations Committee, making the appointment official. Committee chair and Republican gubernatorial candidate John Engler accused the department of spending too much time promoting the governor and too little on economic development strategy. Meyer has strong Republican ties and was a precinct delegate for President Bush. He expressed interest in eliminating item pricing requirements and in maintaining the Yes! Michigan! promotion program.
- In testimony before a special House committee, Gerald Gordon, the administrator of the Department of Corrections substance abuse services unit, said 80 percent of inmates entering Michigan's prisons have alcohol and drug problems needing treatment. Joan Walker, the director of the Michigan Office of Substance Abuse, stressing the importance of treatment programs, indicated that there is a 50 percent reduction in criminal activities by former inmates who undergo substance abuse treatment.

Political News

- A court order temporarily banning two Proposal A television commercials was overturned in the Michigan Court of Appeals this week. Oakland county circuit judge Steven Andrews had placed a temporary restraining order on the ads following a lawsuit filed by tax-cut advocate and attorney L. Brooks Patterson, who contends that the ads are misleading in their assertion that funds raised through Proposal A would be constitutionally earmarked for education spending.
- The state employees pension fund held steady in last Friday's stock market plunge when the Dow Jones industrial average fell 190 points. Usually, about \$9 billion of the state's \$18 billion pension fund is invested in the market, but the Michigan Department of Treasury had recently sold \$1 billion in stocks, leaving less of an investment to be affected by the decline.
- The political clout of two strong special interest groups was demonstrated in Lansing this week. On Tuesday motorcyclists were successful in having a House committee approve a measure removing the requirement that they wear helmets while riding in Michigan. Under the legislation, cyclists riding in populated areas and minors still would be required to wear them, however. In other action, disabled veterans want passage of legislation in the Senate that would enable them to purchase state hunting and fishing licenses at reduced rates. The bills would permit totally disabled veterans to buy their licenses at the same cost as senior citizens.
- Governor James Blanchard announced that 15,476 new applications were received for the Michigan Education Trust (MET) program for the current fiscal year. MET allows parents and grandparents to prepay tuition for children who will attend public universities. Last year, when MET first was introduced, more than 80,000 applications were received and over 40,000 future collegiates were enrolled.
- According to the *Detroit Free Press*, Mayor Coleman Young is seeking an additional \$15.6 million to continue a vacant housing demolition program in Detroit that began in April. Young's political opponents contend he is speeding up demolitions to win votes this election year.

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