

Michigan ROUNDUP

October 22, 1992

Political News

- As Michigan State University picked up post-debate litter, **presidential candidates** were already planning their next campaign swing through this state, considered a must-win by each party. Gov. Bill Clinton will be in Saginaw on Sunday, while President George Bush will touch down in either Macomb or Wayne County. Earlier in the week, Democratic presidential candidate Clinton was reminded of the perks of incumbency as his plane sat sidelined at Metro Airport to accommodate priority handling of Air Force Two, carrying Vice-President Dan Quayle.
- A prominent ex-member of the **League of Women Voters** charged the group with having the credibility of a supermarket tabloid. Lt. Gov. Connie Binsfeld said the League had lost its credibility as a result of its strong criticism of ballot Proposal C, the "cut and cap" property tax relief measure aggressively backed by the Republican administration. Binsfeld and other critics say that League criticism of Proposal C undermines the group's reputation for nonpartisan analysis. The League defends its stand, saying that it has always been an advocacy organization.
- Lafayette Clinic, the 150-bed internationally renowned **psychiatric research center**, closed last week hours after the state appellate court overturned a lower court ruling that had kept the facility open against the wishes of Gov. John Engler. The clinic became the focus of a pitched political battle several months ago when the governor vetoed the facility's \$17.5 million budget for the fiscal year that began October 1, arguing that the state could not afford to continue operation. Following the court of appeals ruling last week that the clinic could not operate without a budget appropriation, House Speaker Lewis Dodak (D-Taymouth Township) called for a special session of the legislature to name a conference committee to resolve the funding dispute. Senate Majority Leader Dick Posthumus (R-Alto) declined, noting that the upper chamber had earlier approved a measure to transfer the clinic's research and training functions to Wayne State University. The House had voted to restore fully the center's budget but lacked votes to override the gubernatorial veto. Meantime, the House Mental Health Committee held a fact-finding hearing to review the matter, and the Michigan Supreme Court is expected ultimately to consider hearing the case.
- Although the top of their ticket trails in the polls, Michigan Republicans remain in relentless pursuit of **control of the State House of Representatives**. House Speaker Lew Dodak and Majority Floor Leader Pat Gagliardi (Drummond Island) are both facing unusually close contests with challengers backed by what the *Detroit News* calls "big GOP bucks." Dodak, an eight-year House veteran, lost nearly 50 percent of his former district to reapportionment. Roughly half of his new Saginaw County constituents are Republicans. Reapportionment dealt an even harder blow to Gagliardi, a five-term incumbent whose new district spans both sides of the Mackinac Bridge; the new, five-county district is 53 percent Republican. House Minority Leader Paul Hillemonds (R-Holland) says of their prospects, "In an anti-incumbent year, we feel they're vulnerable." Statewide, the Republicans are investing \$2 million in House races, hoping to gain the six additional seats necessary to capture control of the 110-seat chamber. For their part, Dodak and Gagliardi predict they will not only win their own seats but will go on to expand the House's Democratic majority to a 62-48 margin.
- The Department of Management and Budget now has a **Privatization Division**, headed by DMB attorney Chere Calloway. The new office is charged with analysis and review of proposals to privatize some services currently undertaken by state government.
- Four-term Republican U.S. Representative Paul Henry is **recuperating from brain surgery** to remove a tumor discovered following his complaint last weekend of severe headaches. Henry, 50, has been a heavy favorite for reelection and has been mentioned as a possible 1994 U.S. Senate candidate.
- Faced with concerted negative reaction from senior citizens, the **Michigan Commission on Services to the Aging** has withdrawn its proposal to consolidate the existing 14 area agencies for seniors into 7 larger ones. The plan, formulated without input from senior citizens, has been shelved after two months of increasing criticism; an expanded work group will draw up a new proposal.
- Governor Engler turned 44 last week, and his October 15 **birthday party** at the Lansing Center drew guests in cowboy costume for the country-and-western theme. Tickets to the festivities were \$100, and well-wishers were offered a country-western concert, barbecue buffet, and a large-screen television on which to watch the second presidential debate.