

## Michigan ROUNDUP

October 29, 1992

### Political News

- Seeking to wring every last drop of partisan support from state voters, **presidential candidates** George Bush and Bill Clinton made their thirteenth and fourteenth forays, respectively, into Michigan this week. Most pundits agree that winning the state is essential to capturing the presidency, so candidates are not working the peninsular byways alone. While Clinton and Bush work major urban centers, Sen. Al Gore has campaigned in Marquette, Marilyn Quayle did a six-city Northern Michigan sweep, Barbara Bush made a nonspeaking appearance at a Warren shopping mall, and Hillary Clinton will address a rally at the Fox Theatre in Detroit Thursday night. Senator Gore's father and childhood friends of the Clintons are set to stump in the state capital on Friday.
- The U.S. president used a Detroit campaign visit to sign a bill making "**carjacking**" a federal crime. During a Sunday appearance before a meeting of the International Association of Chiefs of Police, Bush approved the legislation making theft of an auto at gunpoint punishable by up to 15 years imprisonment; he also signed federal legislation toughening penalties against "deadbeat dads" who default on child support payments.
- A record 89 percent of eligible Michigan residents are now **registered to vote** in next Tuesday's elections. A surge in new registrations pushing the total above 6 million is being attributed to voter frustration with the economy and gridlocked government. Ease of registration has historically boosted Michigan's voter rolls, but not its voter turnout: the state ranked 31 out of 50 in the 1990 elections.
- If the "Cut and Cap" **property tax relief** Ballot Proposal C is defeated, "all hell is going to break loose" when homeowners receive double-digit assessment increases, Gov. John Engler predicts. In a *Detroit News* interview, Engler said he still believes the plan will win voter approval, although he acknowledges some polls indicate the measure will fail. Engler aides have vigorously disputed the accuracy of these negative forecasts; Engler Communications Director Rusty Hills told a *News* columnist, "If [published polls] were accurate, I'd be communications director for Jim Blanchard."
- There's no **economic upturn** in sight, according to PSC Senior Economist Robert Kleine, who says that the growing federal deficit is the major economic and political problem facing the nation. The economy will continue to perform poorly, Kleine predicts, until the deficit is addressed through a combination of tax increases and spending cuts. "We cannot grow our way out of the problem," Kleine says in a federal budget overview released this week.
- The Michigan Supreme Court has refused to hear arguments over the **closing of Lafayette Clinic** until the state court of appeals has completed rulings on the controversial shut-down of the formerly state-financed psychiatric facility. Meanwhile, agreement between the state and the several unions representing clinic employees will permit them to be paid for their sixteen working days when the clinic was open under court order without a state budget appropriation.
- The state's largest insurance company, AAA of Michigan, mailed more than 800,000 rate-reduction letters to customers this week, describing potential savings under Ballot **Proposal D**. AAA succeeded in putting the Proposal D initiative petition on the November ballot after the legislative and executive branches failed to agree on auto insurance reforms. Critics of the plan say any consumer savings could be short-lived and contend that the proposal's main beneficiaries are insurers, whose profits would increase substantially.
- Japanese automakers regularly violated **vehicle import limits** in the 1980s while the U.S. government did nothing about it. That's the charge leveled this week by Congressman John Dingell, Democratic chair of the House Energy and Commerce Committee, whose subcommittee report contains the allegations. A vocal critic of Japanese trade practices, Dingell told a Detroit news conference that more than 100,000 cars beyond the limit were brought into the country in the last decade, costing at least 30,000 American jobs. According to the *Detroit Free Press*, Toyota representatives have denounced the report.
- The U.S. Senate Banking Committee chairman, Michigan Democrat Donald Riegle, has held an **unusual hearing** during the congressional recess, at which he was the only committee member present. At the hearing, Riegle accused the Bush administration of providing "false information" on American export of advanced technology to Iraq before the Gulf War and charged the Justice Department with delay in investigating possible criminal wrongdoing.
- The presidential debate at Michigan State University drew the **largest television audience** of the four 1992 confabs, according to A.C. Nielsen statistics released this week. With more than 90 million viewers tuned into the MSU Wharton Center stage, the event also outdrew the last two presidential debates in 1988, which attracted 74 million and 69 million viewers, respectively.