

Michigan ROUNDUP

November 13, 1992

Legislative and Political News

- Legislative critics once carped about gridlock, but now there's no grid. Unofficial tallies continue to reflect an **evenly divided House**, 55-55. Although under the House rules, current Democratic leadership controls the chamber through the remainder of the calendar year, questions of partisan succession preoccupy both chambers and virtually no action on bills is anticipated (one Associated Press account described the Senate as "mesmerized" by the partisan fight to the death in the House). Both chambers convened briefly on Thursday; the House will reconvene on November 18 and the Senate on December 3.
- The much-contested House **election results** will be certified by the Board of State Canvassers on either November 20 or 23, in compliance with the statutory requirement that the process be completed within 14 days of balloting. Losers in each race then have 48 hours in which to request a recount, specifying the precincts they wish to have examined. Opposing candidates are free to file counterpetitions, demanding recounts in precincts they believe will confirm their lead. According to a Bureau of Elections spokesperson, there is no time limit for completing a recount, although most are finished by mid-December.
- In the event of a **Republican takeover** of the lower chamber—either through an actual majority or by means of one or more richly speculated Democratic defections—The *Wall Street Journal* predicts that Gov. John Engler "plans a bold 100 days reform blitz, including tax cuts, trucking deregulation, and privatization." Meeting in caucus Thursday, Republicans reelected Paul Hillegonds as their leader. Five-term veteran Richard Bandstra (Grand Rapids) won his caucus' support for floor leader, while Grand Ledge resident Frank Fitzgerald was named speaker pro tempore, an office that would take effect if Republicans control the chamber.
- Former Gov. Jim Blanchard gave a breezy brush-off to suggestions that he would help fellow **Democrats retain control** of the state House. "Those guys haven't called me in two years," Blanchard is quoted as telling the *Detroit News*. "I'm on my way to Washington; I'm not involved in this." The Democrats are scheduled to elect leaders on November 18, amid speculation that they will push for a rules change permitting continued Democratic control of the House if neither party musters a majority.
- A tabulation of Michigan's **contaminated sites** yields a list of 2,575 polluted places—not including 6,340 leaky underground storage tank sites. This tally is required by P.A. 307, which also mandates that the sites be ranked according to the risk they pose to public health and the environment. Michigan has spent \$40 million since 1989 to clean up and remove from the list about 100 sites.
- The stream of visitors to **retiring U.S. Rep. William Broomfield** (R-Birmingham) aren't necessarily coming by just to wish him well. The 36-year congressional dean has the most desirable office in the Rayburn Building, and lawmakers must have at least 20 years' seniority just to enter a lottery for the chance to claim Broomfield's spectacular Capitol view.
- Protesting that he is "not an official candidate," but conceding that he is "seriously considering running," **former state Republican chairman Spencer Abraham** is being promoted for national party chairman by Vice President Dan Quayle. Abraham's remarks and Quayle's endorsement were reported by the *Detroit News* in a story describing Abraham, current vice chairman of the National Republican Congressional Committee, as a moderate conservative who is tolerant of varying views on abortion and individual rights.
- East Lansing **Democrat Bob Carr**, who last week won a close race for a ninth term in Congress, finds himself heir to what the *Detroit Free Press* terms one of Washington's most powerful posts. Carr's chairmanship of the House Transportation Appropriations Committee puts him at the point of the funnel through which all of President-elect Bill Clinton's promised public improvement projects—including infrastructure overhaul and high-speed rail—must pass. Carr also will become vice chairman of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce, State, Justice, and the Judiciary. During his last campaign Carr credited his committee seniority with directing \$200 million in federal road projects to his district.
- The Michigan Supreme Court has agreed to review the **constitutionality of sobriety checkpoints** in the wake of years of debate on the issue. A 1986 arrest in the state using the checkpoints was thrown out by the court of appeals but upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court. The state appeals court subsequently ruled against the check lanes again, this time on the ground that they violate the state constitution. The Michigan high court will rule on whether the state imposes a stricter ban on search and seizure than does the U.S. Constitution.