



*Public Sector Reports*

## Michigan ROUNDUP

November 21, 1991

### *Legislative Week in Review*

- Governor John Engler **rescinded an executive order** this week following a negative House committee vote dubbed by the *Detroit Free Press* as "Engler's first partisan rebuke." The Conservation, Recreation, and Environment Committee voted unanimously to reject Engler's order abolishing a scientific panel created to resolve disputes between the Department of Natural Resources and alleged polluters under the state's new polluters pay law. As part of a reform package reorganizing the DNR, Engler had proposed a new panel that would take the cost-effectiveness of cleanups into account—a change that infuriated lawmakers who called it an unconstitutional encroachment of legislative powers. Four Republicans abstained from the 11-0 rejection vote, but three GOP representatives voted with the Democratic majority, signaling a rare breaking of ranks among Republicans and their governor. Three other executive orders revamping the DNR are unaffected by this change.
- The votes were not there for four futile tries this week as House Democrats sought to **override vetoes** in two 1992 budget bills. Vain attempts to restore funding for hunger and health care programs failed along party lines and were criticized by Republicans as political posturing.
- Wayne County residents would win the right to vote for higher taxes to pay for a **new baseball stadium** as HB 5300 passed the lower chamber 63-42 this week; the bill now will go to the Senate. The much-debated stadium question may get to county voters as early as March under the bill's provisions, which permits two separate ballot initiatives to test support for imposing excise taxes to finance the county's share of debt in a proposed new stadium for the Detroit Tigers. An amendment in the bill extends similar rights to Muskegon residents who may vote to hike local levies to finance renovations to their Walker Arena.
- Smokers held their own at home but lost restaurant space in two measures passed this week. The Senate discussed SB 179, which requires half the seating to be **nonsmoking** in restaurants seating 30 or more patrons. The bill, which permits smokers to occupy up to 75 percent of the space only when they outnumber nonsmokers, is expected to win Senate passage today. The House version of the bill passed that chamber last week. The Senate passed last week and sent to the House SB 484 forbidding employers from discriminating against workers who smoke on their own time. The measure does allow employers to adjust health insurance benefits to reflect the higher cost of insuring smokers.

### *Political News*

- Michigan's U.S. House members voted mainly along party lines in upholding a presidential veto Tuesday on the controversial ban on **abortion counseling** at family planning clinics serving poor women. President Bush's preference for the ban, called a gag rule by its critics, will prevail since the 276-156 veto override vote was just short of the required two-thirds majority. Of Michigan's 18 House members, all Democrats except Dale Kildee voted to override the veto; all Republicans except Carl Pursell and Fred Upton supported the veto.
- U.S. Senator Donald Riegle hosted a high-powered Washington meeting on Detroit's **public housing woes**, making Michigan headlines this week. U.S. Secretary for Housing and Urban Development Jack Kemp met with Detroit Mayor Coleman Young and talked by telephone with Governor Engler before announcing creation of a crisis team to help expedite more than \$200 million in federal funds for public housing repairs and homeless shelters in Detroit.
- In related news, Governor Engler announced Wednesday the **Metro Detroit Job Pact**, a new program using federal funds to match homeless and unemployed job seekers with prospective employers. The Michigan Employment Security Commission will administer the \$187,000 grant announced by the governor at a supermarket press conference in Redford Township.
- Making good on an oft-repeated campaign promise, Governor Engler is scheduled to complete his last two county visits today. Candidate Engler pledged to visit every Michigan county; Iosco and Arenac counties complete his 1991 itinerary.
- House Speaker Lewis Dodak (D-Taymouth Township) named a 31-member **Commission on the Great Lakes** to identify and study environmental issues. In addition to 23 public members, 8 Democratic lawmakers—including key committee chairs—have been appointed to the panel.
- Michiganians are more pessimistic now than they have been in a year, according to a new **PSC poll** underwritten by the Michigan Hospital Association. Concern about the economy and decreasing confidence in government characterized the findings of the statewide survey conducted in late October. The governor's approval rating dropped to 44 percent, his lowest showing in the series of four polls. Meanwhile, public approval of the legislature dropped from 47 percent in June to 35 percent in October.
- The House and Senate will adjourn until December 3 for Thanksgiving recess. *Roundup* will not appear next week; publication will resume on December 5.