



Public Sector Reports

Michigan ROUNDUP

Legislative Week in Review

- Republicans resisted an attempt by Democrats to get the **parental consent bill** (HB 5103) to the Senate floor on Tuesday and sent the legislation back to committee. The bill, which would require minors to get parental permission to have an abortion, is not expected to reappear in the Senate until late January. There is some speculation that the delay is politically motivated because polls show that most state residents support parental consent, and keeping the bill alive would benefit parental-consent advocate and gubernatorial hopeful Sen. John Engler (R-Mt. Pleasant). Governor Blanchard plans to veto the bill.
- Senate Republicans Tuesday returned to committee House-passed legislation (HB 5313) to roll back **auto insurance rates** by 30 percent and an additional 10 percent for senior citizens, with the intent that the rollback percentage be reduced. According to the *Detroit News*, Senate Republicans accused Democrats of using the bill to win favor with voters.
- The Democrat-supported effort to cut \$70 million from the \$102-million **capitol restoration project** was sent to the Senate Government Operations Committee. Democrats argued for a halt in restoration, calling the existing plan extravagant while welfare budgets are underfunded.
- In 1976 a law was passed prohibiting increases in **property tax assessments** of homeowners who made major improvements, such as roofing and siding. Subsequent Court of Appeals decisions interpreted the law to mean that the value of the homes then could be reduced by an amount equal to the repair cost. On Wednesday, a House-passed bill was approved by the Senate that should, according to Sen. Harry Gast (R-St. Joseph), a sponsor of the 1976 law, return the legislation to its original meaning. Governor Blanchard is expected to sign the bill.
- The House Judiciary Committee approved a bill that would exempt businesses that contract with Michigan's public universities from the Michigan Freedom of Information Act. Public universities requested the bill because they fear that researchers will be less willing to contract with them if their **trade secrets** become public information.

Political News

- State Republican Chairman Spencer Abraham was appointed deputy chief of staff to Vice President Dan Quayle on Wednesday. Although Abraham will move into his office in the Executive Office Building near the White House early in January, he intends to continue in his current position with the Michigan GOP without pay. David Doyle, the party's executive director, will take over daily operations.
- Governor James Blanchard, Sen. Jack Welborn (R-Kalamazoo), and Rep. Teola Hunter (D-Detroit) announced plans to create a new **state department for child and family services** to address such problems as child abuse, infant mortality, substance abuse, school dropouts, and teen pregnancy. If successful, the plan would create a 20th state department, bringing the total to the Michigan constitutional limit. Proponents argue that the current system fragments and duplicates programs, and as a result Michigan children do not receive the services they need. The ongoing debate about whether to consolidate children's services was rekindled last month after release of an infant mortality report that indicated Michigan infants in poor families are 2 1/2 times more likely to die than those in other families.
- The University of Michigan and Wayne State University announced **tuition hikes** six months ahead of schedule; the increases are the lowest in recent years. The presidents of both institutions are using the announcement to push for more state funding to keep next year's tuition increases under 6.5 percent. U-M president James Duderstadt and WSU president David Adamany hope that the announcement will encourage election-year debate on funding for higher education and change the focus from higher tuitions to increased funding for Michigan's public universities.
- According to the *Detroit Free Press*, Michigan Department of Public Health (MDPH) statistics from 1980 through June 1989 show that **abortions** have been performed in only 29 counties, although the women getting them are from all 83. The primary reasons cited for the limited availability of abortions in many counties are a shortage of doctors, the difficulty of getting physicians to practice in rural areas, the desire of women in small towns for privacy, not enough volume to support an abortion clinic, and community sentiment against abortions.



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