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Ross fights to rebuild tax freeze

Responsible property tax reform is the state Legislature's overwhelming 1981 priority, says state Sen. Doug Ross, D-Southfield, whose district includes Farmington Hills, Lathrup Village and Farmington.

Ross has re-introduced a bill to freeze all property taxes at their current level for one year. The bill passed the state Senate but died in the House at the end of the legislative session in December.

"Because of property assessment growth, the freeze should be passed by the Legislature to give citizens some control over the rising tax situation," Ross said.

"Without tax reform, we'll continue to lose public confidence. If the third Fitch tax cut amendment is proposed and passes, people will be left without a state capable of leading them in the next 20 years."

Officials at Southfield's city hall haven't taken a stand on the Ross proposal. But many maintain the freeze would be detrimental to the city and school district because they'd have little chance of recouping revenue losses.

ROSS MAINTAINED city and school officials may tack on a few more mills for services while the freeze is in effect. If more revenue and services are needed, voters could decide on a millage hike, he said.

The proposed one-year freeze would buy time for state legislators to come up with some logical, lasting solutions to the property tax dilemma, Ross said.

Under Gov. William Milliken's proposal, Ross said, cities would roll back millage rates to offset assessment increases. This is similar in impact to Ross's proposed freeze, according to the senator.

The governor's plan would shift \$500 million from property taxes to sales taxes. The state, cities and schools would share in making up for a \$250 million cut in property taxes, Ross said.

The second priority, Ross said, is to revitalize Michigan's gloomy financial climate. The state lacks a strategy to rebuild the shaky economy, he contended.

"Two tasks lie ahead of us which may take 10-20 years to implement,"

Ross said. "We have to hang on to the auto industry and convince General Motors to put new investments into Michigan."

"THE OTHER task is to use water, natural gas, a skilled labor force and research by state universities to develop new growth industries. This will provide stable, well-paying jobs for all who want to work."

Ross suggests that state legislators negotiate with General Motors and offer the corporation tax advantages to build more new plants in Michigan.

The University of Michigan has been tapped to identify possible new industries for the state, Ross said.

"We're sitting on fresh water and that ought to induce industries to come here," Ross said. "Our business climate should be adjusted for more high-wage industries."

Ross, who was elected to the Senate in 1978, says he plans to run again in two years. He outlined legislative bills he introduced, most of which have been signed into law.

They include:

- A bill to protect senior citizens on fixed incomes from being forced to move from apartment units converted to condominiums. The measure gives elderly persons 4-to-10-year leases in these buildings.

- A bill to refund rent subsidies to senior citizens whose monthly payments exceed 40 percent of their incomes. Money for the credits has been appropriated by the state.

- Legislation to allow small businesses to pay taxes on profits instead of payroll has passed the Senate and is waiting for House action. Under the proposal, small businesses wouldn't be taxed when they don't make money.

- Legislation requiring descriptions of all state rules and regulations imposed on businesses to determine if benefits are as great as the costs.

- A paperwork bill was passed providing that by 1983 every form the state uses will be terminated unless a legislative committee decides it's needed. Gov. William Milliken vetoed the bill but Ross says he hopes the governor will change his mind or his veto will be overridden.

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Solitude has always been part of the library scene as is demonstrated by (from left) Greg Semke, Jay Spisak and Keith Semke. But the Farmington library system is reaching out to children by designing a wing just for them. (Staff photo by Randy Borst)

More than just books

Library designs children's wing

By MARY GNIEWEK

The new children's room at the Farmington Hills branch library offers young patrons much more than books.

There's record albums, filmstrips, cassettes, educational games and a panorama of visual learning tools, like a diorama with crayfish.

Designed by the Farmington architectural firm of Merritt & McCallum, the section has mobiles, paper mache sculpture, full scale one room schoolhouse, puppet theatre, free form sculpture and gerbils.

The live plants nurtured by Children's Coordinator Jill Locke look like leftovers from "Jack and the Beanstalk."

The new wing, which occupies 6,000 square feet of the basement of the library, 32737 W. 12 Mile, will be dedicated officially on Sunday,

Feb. 15, with pomp and fanfare.

Youngsters are invited to bring their favorite adult for an afternoon of music provided by the Farmington Musicale and puppet shows performed by Darrol Hildebrandt, nationally known puppeteer and Muppet Show performer.

"In library architecture for years, children's rooms were an exact replica of adult rooms on a smaller scale," said G. Gordon Lewis, library director.

"Studies done on how children learn in terms of their environment resulted in a change in how learning space is conceived.

"THERE'S MORE EMPHASIS on furniture designed for children and use of warm colors for the creation of an environment which coincides with how they learn."

He points to the foam cushion pillows that youngsters can use to sit

on the floor while they read. Kids scramble on the giant sculpture piece in the center of the room. In the puppet theatre, they can perform their own shows. It's an informal atmosphere.

An adjacent room will be used for story hours, arts and crafts, and other special programs.

"All programs for children will encompass learning activities," Lewis said.

The library has 1,000 visitors a day, Lewis said.

When reading materials and patrons became too cramped in the temporary first-floor children's section, the move to the lower level was inevitable.

"When the library was dedicated in 1972, the lower level area was left unfinished specifically for a children's room," Lewis explained.

"It was just a big cement room

waiting for us to grow into it," added Mrs. Locke.

Moving from 2,000 to 6,000 square feet will allow the library to expand its collection for children, parents, teachers and professionals. There's already special materials for gifted and learning disabled children.

Groups and classes will be able to display art work in the expanded space. Farmington Schools will bring in an art show for the open house next Sunday.

The open house starts at 1 p.m. Farmington Musicale will perform shows at 1 p.m. and 3 p.m. and will present a \$2,000 Yamaha grand piano to the library during its show.

The six-foot piano will be available to groups and individuals using the library auditorium. Hildebrandt will perform puppet shows at 2 p.m. and 4 p.m.

Educators' cable shopping list would link community

Imagine television channels that could link all schools, libraries and government offices in the Farmington area.

High school classes could tune into lectures at Oakland Community College.

Kindergarten students might listen to a story hour, courtesy of the Farmington Public Library.

Government students could watch the Farmington Hills City Council in action.

For on-the-spot local viewing, a full color studio and mobile van could be operated in Farmington, Farmington Hills and Novi.

"I've looked at a lot of things we expect cable TV to do," said William Prisk, assistant superintendent of finance for the Farmington Public Schools.

Though the school district has no control over the selection of a cable TV franchise — that's up to government officials in the three-city area — Prisk was asked to list the district's priorities.

His 13-point report, approved by the Farmington Board of Education, will be sent to Farmington City Manager Robert Deadman and Farmington Hills City Manager Lawrence Savage for consideration.

Prisk asked the officials to consider numerous points.

All standard home service offered in the basic package to subscribers be included to the Farmington Public Schools.

IN ADDITION TO all governmental and public access channels, at least two channels will serve as educational channels.

The schools have asked for an institutional network with three channels to link all school buildings, libraries, colleges and government offices in the three-city area.

Another channel would connect the Oakland County Intermediate School District with the Farmington Public School District. The Southwest Oakland County Vocational Education Center in

Walled Lake will be included in the hook-up.

The schools would expect eight 25-inch color monitors, with wheeled cart, camera, microphones, video recorder and other devices necessary for transmitting and receiving.

They would be scattered throughout the district at high schools, middle schools, an elementary school and administrative offices.

A full color studio and mobile van is requested, with a minimum of 25 hours a week requested by the school district for utilization.

All equipment should be repaired, maintained and replaced by the franchise during the term of the franchise. Consultant services should also be provided.

Within a year of signing the franchise, the studio and mobile production units should be operational. Within 18 months of the effective date, all educational buildings in the franchise should be operational.

A FULL SECURITY alarm monitoring service should be provided to the school district's buildings.

A committee composed of representatives from the three cities has sent out a proposal to various cable TV vendors, giving them three months to respond.

The committee will then take another two months to analyze the proposals. A recommendation should be forthcoming by August or September.

It will probably be 1982 before the area has cable TV service.

District revamps free meal policy

The Farmington Public Schools has announced a new policy for free meals and free milk or reduced price meals for children unable to pay the full price.

This change in income eligibility under the National School Lunch, School Breakfast, Special Milk, and USDA Donated Foods program is the result of

recent Congressional action.

- Family of one is eligible for free meals if yearly income is \$5,700 or less, reduced price meals if yearly income is \$5,701 to \$8,350.
- Family of two: Free — \$7,220 or less. Reduced price — \$7,221 to

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Words of wisdom

Wise old Ben Franklin came to one of our local school recently to tell the students about the wisdom offered in books. To see what these children learned, turn to the Suburban Life Section B. (Staff photo by Randy Borst)

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