

MEA wants state to assure funds

By TIM RICHARD

The Michigan Education Association, the union which represents 80 per cent of the state's public school teachers, wants the state to have authority to raise or lower the personal income tax in mid-year in order to guarantee funding to local school districts.

MEA's proposal would require the legislature to grant tax rate adjustment authority to the governor's bureau of the budget and management.

The proposal is designed to correct recession-year problems in which state revenues fall short of projections and budgets have to be cut.

THE PLAN was unveiled Tuesday by MEA executive Herman Coleman at the Detroit Press Club.

Coleman said the guarantee would apply only to the education portion of the state budget. He took "no position" on whether other services should be given similar guarantees.

The process would work like this: State policy would be that "the state income tax rate shall be adjusted during the fiscal year to ensure that the educational appropriations passed by the state legislature shall be paid in full."

"Procedurally, the bureau of budget and management in consultation with the state treasurer, each 60 days, would determine if revenue forecasts were accurate and if education funds appropriated could be paid in full and on schedule."

"In the event they could not, the bureau would notify the treasurer what the adjusted income tax rate for the current year would be, and collections would increase 60 days thereafter to insure prompt and full payment of educational appropriations."

for the balance of that year."

COLEMAN SAID the system would protect schools from serious errors in the budgeting process, protect college students from mid-year tuition increases, and protect property owners from "unanticipated but necessary and repeated efforts to raise local millage rates."

He said to implement such a system has been introduced in the legislature, and Coleman readily admitted MEA's budgeting average on legislative proposals has been slipping in recent years, despite the growing numbers of former educators among the ranks of lawmakers.

He said Florida has begun to take such a step, but the change is otherwise unprecedented.

AMONG TAX ECONOMISTS, the idea of adjusting tax rates in mid-year is far from novel. It has long been advocated as a method for allowing government to adjust quickly to problems of recession and inflation.

The chief reason the system has never been adopted at either federal or state levels, however, is that it involves the legislature's giving the executive some leeway in adjusting tax rates without legislative approval. Legislative bodies are traditionally jealous of their authority to change tax rates.

MEA's plan is different from the usual because it suggests the legislature place no limits on the executive's authority to adjust tax rates - only that the legislative appropriation be funded in full.

"What the measure would do is that the legislature wouldn't appropriate to the state and stick the governor with the duty job of levying the appropriate tax rate," Coleman concluded. "The governor has a veto power."

Test of merger veto postponed 'til April

Democrats on the Oakland County Board of Commissioners will wait until April 13 to decide whether to override County Executive Daniel T. Murphy's veto of the board's effort to merge the drain commissioner's office with the public works department.

Republicans Thursday sought an immediate test of strength, figuring they had enough votes to defeat an override at temps.

Commissioner Patrick Nowak (R Farmington) told the Observer & Eccentric that Democrats apparently are awaiting the outcome of a March 23 special election in the 36th commission district - Wilson, part of Farmington Hills. There, former Republican Commissioner Lew Coy is reportedly campaigning for the Democratic runoff date.

Republican Murphy last week was winner of a lawsuit in which he said his office got control of the DFW when the county executive system went into effect in 1973.

But Democratic commissioners contended the court ruling didn't hurt the county board's power to effect the merger. Said Board Chairman Alexander Perinoff (D Southfield):

"When you consider the joining of one department (DFW) with an elective office (drain commissioner), it does not require affirmative action of the county executive."

But John McDonald (R Farmington) said: "I don't see how we can even discuss this (merger). The judge's opinion was that the county executive had authority to appoint the DFW director because DFW falls under the executive's jurisdiction."

Commissioner Lawrence Perneck (D Southfield) won voters approval of his motion to take up the veto in three weeks. Republicans asked for a roll call, but Perneck ruled they had waited long to ask and said the vote was carried.

The resolution to merge DFW and the drain commission office was passed 18-4 by the county board March 4. The 18 votes amounted to a two-thirds majority, but Republicans feel that majority won't hold together if an attempt is made to override Murphy's veto. An override also requires a two-thirds majority.

Alex C. Mair now on OU board

A Bloomfield Hills man has been appointed to succeed Leland W. Carr Jr. on the Oakland University Board of Control. Alex C. Mair, M., will serve out the remainder of Carr's term which expires Aug. 11, 1979. The appointment by Gov. William Milliken is subject to senate confirmation. Carr resigned earlier this year. Mair is vice-president of General Motors Corp. and general manager of Pontiac Motor Division. He is a member of the National Advisory Committee on Resources in Engineering and a member of the board of directors of United Way of Michigan.

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