

Realtors push limit to state tax

A proposed amendment to the Michigan Constitution that would limit state taxes to 8.5 per cent of personal income has drawn the wholehearted approval of the Western Wayne-Oakland County Board of Realtors and the Michigan Association of Realtors. Romayne E. Hicks and Richard O'Neill of the Michigan Association of Realtors announced at an April 27 press conference that the two groups have launched a statewide campaign to collect 300,000 signatures on a petition that would place the amendment on the November ballot. The amendment was originally proposed by Taxpayers United, a citizens' organization. Personal income is the total in come received by persons in Michigan from all sources.

State spending increased 118 per cent between 1960 and 1974 while personal income in Michigan rose only 56 per cent in the same period. Hicks said at the conference.

Total state spending in 1960 was \$1.16 billion for the year but has since multiplied sixfold. If this trend continues, the state will be spending over \$20 billion annually by 1990—far outstripping even the most optimistic expectations for rises in personal income, Hicks said.

ACCORDING TO HICKS, the amendment would contain the following provisions:

- The percentage of personal income would be limited to either collective personal income for the last fiscal year or the average of five previous calendar years (whichever is greater).
- If revenue exceeds the limit of 8.5 per cent, a pro rata tax rebate is required.
- The limit can only be exceeded during the year if emergency conditions exist and specific procedures are followed.
- Before making any program or increases in level of services of a political unit in the state, the legislature must provide state funds to cover the cost of the program.
- Local units of government are prohibited from increasing tax rates beyond already authorized levels or from levying any new taxes without voter approval.
- The proportion of state revenues paid to all political units in the state taken as a group cannot be reduced from present levels.
- The limitation does not apply to principal and interest on bonds.
- O'Neill, who called the petition drive "a legal tax revolt," said he didn't expect any difficulty in reaching the goal of 300,000 signatures. He added that petitions have been sent to Realtors' offices throughout the state.

HICKS ALSO pointed out that an overall 45 per cent of personal income goes to supporting government.

"It used to take the state seven hours 33 minutes to spend \$1 million in 1960. Today, it takes the state an hour and 22 minutes to spend the same amount," Hicks said.

"In 1960, a million dollars will only last 17 minutes if the present rate of spending continues. If our state is to prosper, these trends must be reversed," he added.

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Petition drive set for May 8

Oakland County Democrats will be circulating petitions May 8 at shopping centers throughout Oakland County.

The day-long circulation effort is part of a statewide drive to collect 300,000 signatures—the number required to place a proposal for cutting state income taxes on November's general election ballot.

The proposal, which would mandate a 15 per cent reduction of taxes on annual income below \$20,000, plus \$1,500 per dependent, was introduced by the Michigan Citizens Lobby and endorsed by the Michigan Democratic Party.

"We feel Michigan citizens deserve the opportunity to speak out on Michigan's tax system," said Sen. Kerry Karmer of Pontiac and Rep. Philip D. Martin Jr. of Hazel Park, co-chairmen of the Oakland County petition effort.

"It's time Michigan had a 'fair share' tax, instead of the current system which hits middle income families so hard."

UNDER THE proposal, income lost to the state by the tax reduction would be made up by an increase in taxes on income earned above \$16,000 plus \$1,500 per dependent level.

According to Martin and Karmer, 80 per cent of Michigan families would benefit should the proposal be passed in November, but the job right now is to get the proposal on the ballot, where Michigan voters can make up their own minds.

According to Oakland County petition coordinator J. Ragdale, Roy Oak persons interested in volunteering to help with the petition circulation should call party headquarters at 334-8671 or 647-2981.

Ragdale indicated his committee is planning a follow-up drive at voting precincts throughout the County May 18, the presidential primary election.



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