

## Boosts schools, mental health

By MICHAEL MATUSZEWSKI

Mental health reform, property tax relief and improvements in elementary and secondary education will be priorities of Republicans in the Michigan House of Representatives.

State Rep. William Bryant of Grosse Pointe Farms, new GOP floor leader, stopped in Birmingham Monday to give notice that his party's caucus is "alive and well."

"If we don't provide at least adequate mental health care and decent K-12 education, then we've totally failed," Bryant said.

With the voices of more than 100 Birmingham Rotarians echoing from an adjoining room at The Community House in Birmingham, Bryant vowed

to "represent the people of Michigan, to fight to adopt their programs, to elicit, formulate and fight for a taxpayers' agenda."

With mental health, property taxes and education leading the way, Bryant outlined a lengthy list of the caucus' areas of interest.

**LABELING** Robert Tisich's tax-cutting constitutional amendment (rejected in 1978 by voters) an "awkward attempt at property tax relief," Bryant said the Republican caucus would support two tax reform proposals.

"We will support complete property tax relief for senior citizens," he said. "There are so many programs to ease the plight of the senior citizen. Some reduce fees. Some increase property

tax credits. We should just take them out of the property tax business," he said.

The newly-elected Republican legislative leader said his caucus would also support "across-the-board tax credits for property taxes used to support schools."

The lost revenues would be made up through an increase in the state income tax. He predicted, though, that a property tax increase of less than one percent would be enough to make up the lost revenues.

Bryant said that if property tax credits were extended, an increase in the income tax was certain. But he denounced Democratic support of a plan to introduce a graduated rate income tax.

"THE PEOPLE," Bryant said, "believe in the concept that government ought to do for people only those things that people cannot do for themselves."

"At the top of the list of those things people cannot do for themselves is the providing of mental health care."

Michigan's mental health system in 1978 was wracked by charges that mental health workers had tortured and neglected mentally retarded patients at a number of state institutions including the Plymouth Center for Human Development in Northville Township.

"It is a tragedy and a shameful situation when, even though the vast majority of the mental health staff is competent and dedicated, we do not provide decent, humane care and adequate treatment for many of our mentally ill," Bryant said.

As for mounting dissatisfaction with the state's public schools, Bryant said, "The people find it incomprehensible that a child can attend school for 13 years and not be able to read, write and do simple arithmetic. We should be thankful they still support the schools

even in the face of so many children's failure to learn."

As a remedy, he said, the Republican caucus supports mandatory proficiency tests. Such tests, he added, would have to be passed before a student could graduate from high school.

**LOCAL REPUBLICAN** leaders called Bryant's appearance and the priorities for their caucus good ideas.

Some, however, did not agree with

Bryant's statements concerning property tax reform.

State Rep. James Denebaugh (R-Birmingham) said the legislature should reduce the property tax and not bother trying to make up the revenue. He said some state programs could be eliminated.

"Many people," he said, "don't object to taxes, per se. What people are objecting to it not getting their money's worth."

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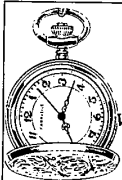
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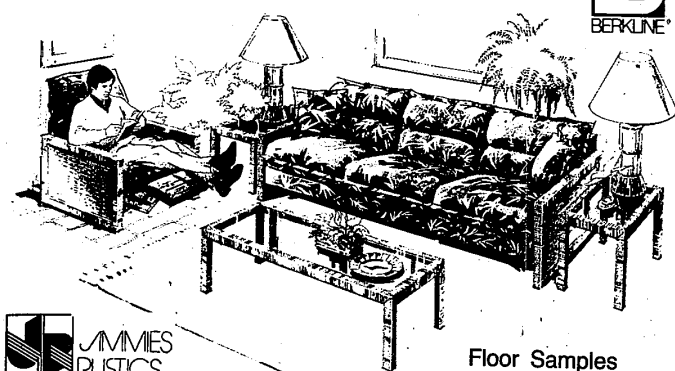
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