

Business, education, labor group fighting Tisch

By TOM LONERGAN

A coalition of political, labor, education and business groups announced this week it will begin an "intensive statewide campaign" to defeat the Tisch tax cut proposal.

The group, called "Citizens to Save our State," listed 52 participating organizations including such diverse "allies" as the Michigan Farm Bureau, New Detroit, Inc., the state AFL-CIO, Greater Detroit Chamber of Com-

merce, the Michigan Education Association and Michigan Association of School Administrators.

"OUR COALITION is non-partisan and independent," said Joanne Snell, of Jackson, state president of the American Association of University Women, (AAUW), at a Monday press conference in Detroit.

"The commitment to save our state from the tragic impact of an irresponsible ballot proposal is the sole concern

that binds us together," she said.

The coalition, organized by the state Parent Teacher Association, League of Women Voters and AAUW, also includes nearly 20 social services and senior citizen aid groups which rely heavily on state funding and unions representing state employees.

The Tisch proposal, recently ordered on the ballot by the Michigan Supreme Court, would reduce property taxes by about \$2 billion a year by rolling back assessments to 1976 levels, then cutting

them in half. It would require the state budget to replace all local units' lost property tax revenue.

Proposal D, as the Tisch plan is called on the Nov. 4 ballot, would require 60 percent voter approval for new taxes.

PROPOSAL D, said Ms. Snell, reading from a prepared statement, "would cut property tax revenue for schools and other local units of government by 25 percent and slash the state general fund by more than 50 percent, resulting in drastic reductions or elimination of essential health, education, social services, law enforcement and other programs."

"Not a single facet of social life would go unaffected if proposal D were adopted."

Under questioning from reporters, Ms. Snell said "we can't prove" all the cuts the coalition predicts will occur if Tisch is adopted, "but we'd be remiss if we didn't warn people."

John Neberle, representing the Greater Detroit Chamber of Commerce, said the Tisch proposal "will eliminate virtually all property tax exemptions" on business property in the state.

"Property taxes will be levied on business inventories, motor vehicles, pollution control devices, materials, supplies and other property now exempt."

COALITION leaders emphasized the

tax cut proposal's potential effect on higher education. They said Tisch would require local voters to approve increases in local fees and permits.

The group said Tisch could lead to a more than 40 percent cut in state aid to colleges and universities at a time when the University of Michigan, Michigan State and Wayne State universities' tuition rates are among the top 10 in the country for public colleges.

"While senior citizens and the poor would receive property tax relief under Proposal D," the group said, "they would also experience the brunt of the drastic cuts in service that would follow."

The group said if the state Department of Social Services has to cut its budget in half, Medicaid for the elderly, general assistance — largely collected by unemployed men — and other service programs could be eliminated.

Under Tisch, the state legislature could not pass new taxes or increase old taxes unless 60 percent of the voters approve.

That, according to coalition leaders, "would shift control of state tax policy to a small minority of voters," because less than a 50 percent margin could defeat a tax referendum.

Too high?

Xerox appealing assessments

Oakland County plans to hire an outside appraiser and may seek legal help in defending a \$20.8 million tax assessment of Xerox Corp. property.

Xerox, a major manufacturer and lessor of copying machines, has appealed a number of personal property assessments to the Michigan State Tax Tribunal. All assessments of Xerox personal property (machinery and equipment) and similar property are in contention.

county thinks it's worth.

The assessment covers a variety of models of Xerox copying machines and leased equipment. Property is assessed at half of market value.

"Xerox says it's worth a lot less than what we think it's worth," said Stephens. The appeal affects 90 of the 108 taxing units (schools, townships, cities and others) in the county, which is why the county is defending the appeal, Stephens said.

A spokesman in Xerox's area offices could not be reached for comment.

goes all the way to the (Michigan) Supreme Court, \$35,000 would really be a conservative figure."

Stephens said if the case goes into the courts, the county may have to hire an attorney specializing in taxes to argue its case.

Tax Tribunal decisions can be appealed to the state Court of Appeals and then the Supreme Court. Xerox was not successful in getting a number of local boards of review to reduce its assessments.

Past Xerox challenges of personal property assessments have been settled before appeals to the state, said Stephens.

But, he added: "We're so far apart, it appears we are not going to get a settlement."

NINE MAJOR copying manufacturers and retailers, including Xerox, are located in Southfield and Troy.

Herman W. Stephens, manager of the county tax equalization division, said Xerox contends the assessed value of its personal property should be \$13.9 million, about \$7 million less than the

THE COUNTY Board of Commissioners earlier this month approved spending \$35,000 to hire an outside appraisal firm for the case.

"We're hoping we don't have to spend that \$35,000," said Stephens. "But if it

Take 2 in county exec race

A second debate between this fall's candidates for the Oakland County executive spot will be held at noon Oct. 9 before the North Oakland Chamber of Commerce in Pontiac.

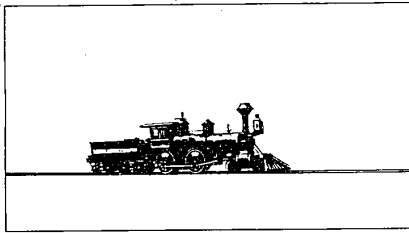
Tickets for the luncheon preceding the debate between Republican incumbent Daniel T.

Murphy and Democratic county commissioner F. Thomas Lewand are \$10.

The debate will be in the Main Event Banquet Room, Pontiac Silverdome.

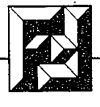
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