

Property tax cut; sales tax hiked

New tax plan heading for May ballot

By TIM RICHARD

Only light opposition came from suburban lawmakers as the Michigan Legislature met Thursday's deadline for putting a tax cut plan on the May 19 ballot.

The end of a frantic week came when the state Senate voted 28-7 to concur in House amendments to the tax plan. It was supported by all five area senators — Democrats William Faust of Westland, Bill Huffman of Madison Heights and Doug Ross of Oak Park and Republicans R. Robert Geake of Northville and Donald Bishop of Rochester.

THE HOUSE gave it 86-17 approval. Representatives voting yes were W.V. Brotherton, R-Farmington; Joe Forbes, D-Oak Park; Richard Fessler, R-Union Lake; and Doug Cruce, R-Troy.

Opposed were James Dellebaugh and Ruth McNamee, both Birmingham Republicans. Not voting was Mat Dunaskie, R-Oxford.

On Tuesday, only Fessler had opposed the package.

The final version failed to contain the so-called Allen amendment, which the Senate passed to remove reimbursement of city income taxes from the package. Sen. Richard Allen had argued it would help only high-income Detroiters paying high property taxes and a city income tax, and that he would be unable to sell it to his rural, mid-Michigan constituents.

The House knocked out the Allen amendment, and the Senate concurred in the House amendment.

ON MAY 19 voters will go to the polls and decide for or against a complex, proposed constitutional amendment. Here are some of the main provisions:

- Local residential property taxes statewide

would be reduced by half, or about \$1.2 billion. This would apply only to operating taxes, not bond issue millage or special assessments for such public works as paving. Relief would come with bills mailed July 1 and be limited to \$1,400 per household.

- A 6 percent cap would be placed on property tax revenue that could be raised from any class of property (excluding new construction) from one year to the next.

- City income tax credits would be allowed for up to \$100 for each 0.5 percent of the tax rate. For persons paying the Detroit income tax, this relief would be up to \$100 for a non-resident commuter and up to \$400 for a Detroit resident.

- The state sales tax would be increased to 5.5 percent from the current 4 percent. The sales tax applies to all retail sales except food and drugs. This would raise \$800 in revenue.

A new set of property tax circuit breakers would go into effect. At present, a homeowner gets an income tax rebate if he pays more than 3.5 percent of family income in property taxes. The new circuit breakers would be: 2.5 percent if income is up to \$5,000 a year; one percent where income is \$5,001 to \$10,000; 2 percent where income is \$10,001 to \$20,000; and 2.5 percent where income is \$20,001 or more.

When all the snowflakes have fallen, the bottom line effect is expected to be a \$225 million tax cut.

FAUST, AS Senate majority leader, used an unusual maneuver to get the package out of the Senate Finance Committee Wednesday.

A 3-2 committee majority favored a "tie-bar" plan whereby both the Legislature's tax plan and the Tish property tax cut would be reported out together.

Faust appointed himself and Republican Leader Robert VanderLaan of Kentwood to the finance committee. The result was a 4-3 majority for the legislative package without being tied to the Tish plan.

Both houses declined to put the Tish plan on the ballot.

Shawwassee County Drain Commissioner Robert Tish, author of the property tax cut plan, denounced Faust's move.

If the package plan is adopted May 19, Tish said he would launch a new petition drive that would not only cut property taxes, but roll back the sales tax to 4 percent. He also threatened to seek revenge against the Michigan Legislature by:

- Cutting the salaries of legislators.
- Limiting the number of terms for which a legislator could be elected.
- Forcing an earlier adjournment of the Legislature.

Deaf group sets meeting

The first board meeting of the Michigan Association of the Elderly Hearing Impaired, Inc., will be 9-11:30 a.m. Friday at the South East Oakland Vocational Education Center.

The center is on Delemere street in Royal Oak between Coolidge and Crooks roads south of 14 Mile.

The hearing impaired group is a social service agency serving Wayne, Oakland, Macomb, Monroe, Livingston, St. Clair and Washtenaw counties.

Slate Rep. Ruth McNamee, R-Birmingham, will address the group at 10:30 a.m.

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Oakland County driving forecast: 'Roads bumpier, people grumpier'

By MIKE SCANLON

It took a 12-page speech to finish the annual state of the roads message last week, but Oakland County Road Commission Chairman Fred Houghten said what he meant in the second paragraph.

"The roads will be bumpier, and the people will be grumpier," he predicted.

Caught in the press between rising costs and declining income, the road commission is in trouble, Houghten told the county board of commissioners.

Michigan roads are funded by one of the highest gasoline taxes in the country, but the tax is based on a flat rate per gallon. As gas prices rise, a combination of higher-mileage cars and less driving means less gasoline is sold and less tax revenue raised.

Gas tax revenues were off 9.2 percent in the last quarter of 1980 compared to the same period the previous while miles driven statewide declined 9.5 percent last year, Houghten said.

THIS YEAR, the road commission has \$2 million available for local matching funds for construction,

compared to \$6.2 million in 1979.

The result for Oakland County is "cutback management," Houghten said.

Half the commission's construction program last year was cancelled, and if revenues continue declining, this year's plans may also be affected, Houghten said.

He gave a "10 worst" list of areas scheduled for resurfacing last year and cancelled. The list included Green Lake Road from Pontiac Trail to Commerce Road in West Bloomfield Township and Maple Road from Orchard Lake to Franklin in Bloomfield and West Bloomfield townships.

Cancelled intersection-widening projects last year included 12 Mile and Halstead and Farmington and 13 Mile, both in Farmington Hills, and Pontiac Trail at Green Lake Road in West Bloomfield.

Houghten said the commission doesn't "see any significant improvement in funding for several years."

Houghten said the county plan to encourage car pooling, called "Share a Ride and Save," can help offset declining revenues by reducing wear and tear to the roads through fewer vehicles.

Looks like Spring

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The Fashion Show at Renaissance Center.

The looks are in. Looks like Spring. Fabulous fashions from the Renaissance World of Shops. Wednesday, March 25, 12:00 noon and 2:30 p.m. See the fashion event of the season in the fashion showcase of the city. Looks like Spring. At Renaissance Center. Admission free.

