

# Lawmakers pledge defeat of Detroit commuter tax

By Mike Scanlon  
staff writer

Suburban lawmakers have vowed to campaign against a Detroit income tax proposal which would triple the income tax rate of suburbanites working in Detroit.

State Reps. Doug Cruce, R-Troy, and Jack Kirksey, R-Livonia, said they will form an independent ballot committee to raise funds to defeat the tax proposal to be voted on in Detroit June 23.

"We intend to go to bus stops and commuter train stops and Park and Ride stops to solicit funds and encourage people to vote no," Cruce said.

"Detroit's financial crisis is not a suburban problem, but the responsibility for bailing the city out is being placed squarely on suburbanites," Cruce said.

Calling it an "11th hour effort," Kirksey said, "We plan to spend every dime we earn to defeat this thing."

The legislators said Cruce will chair the ballot committee while Kirksey will be treasurer.

THE LEGISLATURE late last week

approved a measure which allows Detroit to seek voter approval of a 1 percent income tax hike for residents and nonresidents. The resident rate would increase from 2 to 3 percent while the nonresident rate would go from .5 to 1.5 percent.

It is estimated the tax hike would raise \$94 million for Detroit with \$42 million paid by nonresidents who work in Detroit.

The House gave the legislation approval Thursday 56-50.

The Senate approved the tax authorization Friday in an even closer vote, 20-19, with Lt. Gov. James Brickley casting the tie-breaking vote.

Only Detroiters will vote on the proposed June 23. Suburbanites who work in the city have no vote.

Cruce and Kirksey said they will work the polls on June 23, particularly in heavy voting and "swing" districts.

Kirksey said a yes vote would cost suburbanites unnecessarily and encourage businesses to leave the inner city. "It would be a catalyst to businesses to move from Detroit to other cities where the tax rate is not so high."

THE PROPOSED tax increase is part of Detroit Mayor Coleman Young's three-point plan to save the city from a sea of red ink. A \$119 million deficit is projected for the budget year ending June 30 and a \$150 million deficit is foreseen for next year.

The election-enabling legislation also authorizes Detroit to sell \$100 million in bonds and contains language which could result in appointment of an "administrator" if Detroit's budget is still in the red in July 1982.

The legislation prohibits levying the new income taxes, even if voters approve it, until both the bonds are sold and a balanced city budget is certified by the state Administrative Board, a panel led by Gov. Milliken.

It is estimated that \$76 million in employee wage concessions is necessary to present a balanced budget.

If everything is completed by Aug. 15, the tax hike would be effective retroactive to July 1. If the package takes longer to wrap up, then the higher taxes would take effect the first of the month in which all conditions are met.

Approval in the Senate came as a re-

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— Rep. Doug Cruce, R-Troy

sult of a curious coalition.

"A number of outstate legislators who didn't feel directly affected were able to make a coalition with Detroit legislators," explained state Sen. R. Robert Geake, R-Northville.

"I'm bitterly disappointed," added Geake, who opposed the bill. "It was tough because we had the leader of the Republicans, the leader of the Democrats, and the governor all working against us."

STATE SEN. Bill Huffman, D-Madison Heights, who backed the bill, said he thought the measure was necessary.

"If you don't have a Detroit, you don't have a Birmingham or a Pontiac

or a Flint," he said. Huffman's district includes part of Troy.

(Mayor) Coleman Young has made some mistakes — who hasn't? — but you can't desert him in his time of need," Huffman said. "We didn't give him a dime. All we did was give the people the right to vote on whether they're going to stay in business or go out of business."

In the 20-19 roll-call vote, the bill was supported by Huffman and Senate Majority Leader William Faust, D-Westland.

Opposed were Geake, whose district includes Livonia, Plymouth and Red-

ford; Doug Ross, R-Oak Park, whose district includes Farmington and Southfield; and Donald Bishop, R-Rochester, whose district includes Birmingham-Bloomfield, West Bloomfield and part of Troy.

In the House, 35 Democrats and 21 Republicans supported the measure while 27 Democrats and 23 Republicans opposed it.

ONLY ONE Observer & Eccentric area representative supported it — Rep. Joe Forbes, D-Oak Park, majority floor leader.

Representatives opposed were Democrats John Bennett of Redford, Tom Brown of Westland and William Keith of Garden City; and Republicans W.V. Brotherton of Farmington, James De-fabugh of Bloomfield, Max Duzak of Oxford, Richard Fessler of Union Lake, Ruth McNamee of Birmingham, Sylvia Skrel of Livonia and Jean Wiloughby of Bloomfield Hills.

Four lawmakers failed to vote, including Roy Smith, R-Salis, whose district includes much of Plymouth.

Brickley, a former city of Detroit councilman, ended seven hours of parliamentary wrangling Friday when he cast his tie-breaking vote.

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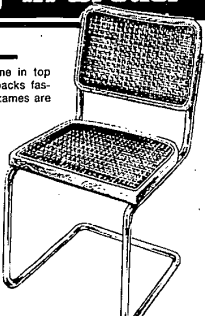
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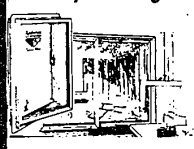
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