

House tax panel looks at options

By Warren M. Hoyt
special writer

Several options to Gov. James Blanchard's income tax proposal — from increasing the sales tax to 6 percent to installing state-owned slot machines — have been presented to the House Taxation Committee since the governor presented his proposal in late January.

Committee Chairman H. Lynn Jondahl, D-East Lansing, said the proposals indicated a "consensus" from legislators that taxes will have to be raised to balance the state deficit. They hoped cost figures on what each proposal would raise could be developed by mid-February.

Meanwhile, house speaker Gary Owen, D-Ypsilanti, called for House cooperation in completing action on a tax proposal by the end of the month. He urged House members to present all tax- and budget-cutting proposals to the taxation and appropriations committees as early as possible.

The options were in response to Blanchard's proposal for a 1.5 percentage point permanent increase in the personal income tax rate, with an additional 0.25 percentage point included to cover an estimated \$800 million deficit due to deviations from generally accepted accounting principles.

AMONG OPTIONS presented to the committee was one by Rep. Thomas Scott, D-Flint, to tax advertising sold by newspapers, radio and television stations, magazines and other media.

Scott did not suggest the proposal replace the Blanchard plan, but asked committee members to analyze it to see how much revenue could be raised if the tax were imposed April 1.

Scott also proposed an amusement tax — similar to that used by former Gov. William Milliken in 1982 — with a tax on theater and sporting event tickets and cablevision, but not on video games.

Freshman Rep. Jerry Bartnick, D-Temperance, called for an increase in the sales tax to 6 percent which would be dedicated to higher education as well as K-12 once the state's deficits are eliminated.

Under the state constitution of 1963, any proposal to increase the sales tax must be approved by the voters. A proposal put on the ballot now could not take effect until mid-May, because of time requirements for the election and to implement the tax.

Jondahl said an increase in the sales tax might be employed as a replacement to the income tax increase in future years.

REP. MICHAEL Beane, D-Detroit, asked for revenue figures if the state installed and operated slot machines — on much the same premise as the daily lottery games — in such places as bars.

Meanwhile, Blanchard, bolstered by a poll showing substantial public support for a tax hike, began a seven-city tour to gain backing for his proposal for solving the state's budget problems. The poll showed 65 percent of those surveyed would support a tax increase

in Michigan if it was necessary to straighten out the state's financial affairs. Some 27.6 percent of the respondents expressed opposition to the new tax while 6.2 percent were undecided.

The random telephone poll of 500 persons conducted by Nordhaus Research also showed that 71.2 percent expect Blanchard to raise taxes while 22.3 percent disagreed with that statement.

Hoyt is executive director of the Michigan Press Association.

Levin offers his jobs bill

U.S. Sen. Carl Levin, D-Mich., has introduced a bill to target \$3 billion to areas with unemployment rates of 10 percent or more and create 250,000 jobs for a pool of workers who have exhausted their unemployment benefits.

In remarks prepared for delivery in the Senate, Levin said the funds would "serve states, localities and rural areas for the repair and rehabilitation of roads and streets, public buildings, parks and playgrounds, as well as for forestry and energy conservation."

"Approximately 2,000 persons in Michigan are exhausting their federal unemployment benefits each week.

Since this legislation targets money to areas of high unemployment, Michigan should get its fair share of the 250,000 jobs created by this bill to meet the need for helping those who have exhausted their benefits," he said.

Levin said the program will "provide jobs for some of those most in need in areas which are among the most depressed with the goal of improving public services and facilities."

"If we focus our job-creation efforts on those who have exhausted their unemployment benefits and who are still out of work, then we can make significant inroads into at least one segment of the unemployed."



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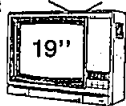
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