Michigan teachers elect new union chief

Larry Chunovich, newly elected resident of the \$2,000-member Michinn Education Association (MEA), said s top priority will be to lobby the ate legislature for more state aid to

The present method of funding pub-ic schools is inadequate, said Chuno-ich, a Southfield-Lathrup High School nathematics teacher for the past 15

"Wealthy districts can afford to have pecialized programs, while poorer dis-ricts that suffer severe cutbacks can't

Although he doesn't propose any reeping changes in the present state d formula, Chunovich hopes to pro-ote establishing stability and equity

Chunovich, who outpolled current IEA vice president Edith Swanson, 18 to 243, won the presidency during e statewide organization's convention at week in Detroit.

He succeeds Keith Geiger, who re-gned as president after six years to an for vice president of the National

MEA goals and objectives.

Addressing the problem of declining state aid to public achools ranks high among MEA's objectives, he said.

A coalilion of 18 statewide groups, including the MEA, was formed more than a year ago to sponsor letter-writing campaigns and lobby the legislature. Their goal is to "convince the governor and the legislature to make funding for public education the state's top priority."

priority."

Gov. James Blanchard has already proposed a \$207.4 million increase in state spending for primary and secondary education in his new spending plan, But Chunovich and other MEA mem-

But Chunovich and other MEA members say that proposal is far from being a panacea.

We're extremely pleased with the governor's proposal," said Chunovich. It will give some poorer district the opportunity to reinstate programs.

However, that's not a long-range solution."

SPOKESMEN FROM THE MEA and other education associations have contended that school districts across the state have faced severe cutbacks in programs as a result of declining state

aid. Ive or six years ago, the state's share was over 50 percent," said Katle Keats, a spokeswoman for the MEA. "Now property taxes account for 60 percent of local school budgets. The

federal government's share is about 5 percent and the remainder comes from the state."

e state."

She said the newly formed coalition

- called Equal Partners for Education continuo requal Partners for Education in Michigan — hopes to push the legislature to live up to the commitment it made when the state aid formula was adopted in 1973.

THE SCHOOL AID PLAN guarantees each of the state's 570 districts a flat \$355 per popil, plus \$50.55 for each of mill of taxation approved by local voters. (One mill equals \$1 for each \$1,000 of equalized properly valuation, usually half the market value of a home.)

If one mill in a district doem't come in to \$50.56 per puril, the difference is not a \$50.56 per puril.

home.) "
If one mill in a district doesn't come
up to \$50.55 per pupil, the difference is
made up by the state. In Southfield,
where property values are high, one
mill of itax raises \$105 per pupil. Southfield is one of some 100 districts classifield as "out of formula" because it gets
little or no state aid.

"Homewer in Romulus which has a

ittie or no state aid.

However, in Romulus — which has a
unaller tax base — one mill raisea
about \$59 per pupil. Poorer districts
uch as Romulus have claimed that ris-

and the poor poorer.

"I don't know how we can, but we must work to provide equity in funding from one district to another," Chuno-

wich said.

Another goal Chunovich bopes to accomplish is lobbying for changes in
state laws governing collective bargalaing for teachers.

"The law allows us to negotiate and
bargain collectively. However, it
doesn't address specific alternatives
available when the parties reach an
impasso.

available when the parties reach an impasse.

"Currently, there are more than 100 local districts in Michigan (sone in Oakland County) whose teachers are working without a contract," Chunovich said.

"Teachers in many districts went on strike this year. The friction that's created during a strike continues to escalate and it gets even harder and harder to pull things together."

TO REMEDY THE situation, the MEA has proposed several alterna-tives, including forcing the two sides to

school boards have been opposed to the idea in the past.

However, he said, swerybody agrees that something has do be done to prevent strikes.

"Ropefully, we'll be more successful in resolving the Issue now that we're dealing with a new governor and a new legislature."
Chumovich has been a teacher in the Southfield school district for 17 years. His first two years were at Southfield. High School and the remaining 15 at Southfield-Lathrup High.

He has been vice chairman of the board of directors for Delta Dental Pilan of Michigan for the past six years.
The former treasurer of the South Oakland MEA for four years, he also served as president of the Southfield Education Association and as a member of the MEA hoard of directors.

His is married and has two daughters.

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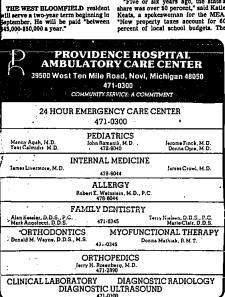
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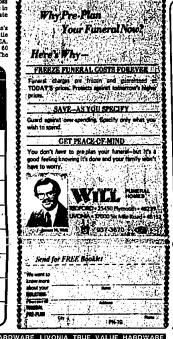
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