

'Right to Know' bill pits labor vs. business

Republicans in the Michigan Senate and Democrats in the House are at a stalemate in adopting a "right to know" law which would alert workers to the hazards of substances they handle.

version of the bill.

IN THE SENATE, the Republican majority sent the House bill to the Labor Committee, headed by Sen. Doug Cruce, R-Troy. In an earlier statement, Cruce had those criticisms of the House bill:

"Several unions, led by the AFL-CIO, are seeking superfluous regulations that list over 65,000 materials — including salt, sand and water — as potentially hazardous.

"They see this as a way to involve more of their members in chemical monitoring tasks and to stop work activity. It does nothing for the safety of the worker."

Cruce said the Senate version, SB 374, takes the new federal regulations, approved under the Occupational Safety and Health Act, and adapts them for Michigan. "We should not impose guidelines in Michigan that are so much more restrictive than all other states. That's been one of Michigan's problems in terms of its reputation and its business climate.

"The regulations create criteria which would cover literally thousands of known hazardous chemicals and implement a new set of warning symbols and labels," Cruce said.

A GROUP calling itself the Michigan Right to Know Task Force criticized the Republican approach.

"Republicans in the state Senate have dealt the citizens of Michigan a

serious blow by further delaying enactment of a strong Right to Know law," said Scott Tobey, chair of the task force.

"Republicans in the state Senate voted on a straight party line to send their Right to Know bill back to the Labor Committee," said Tobey.

"While Republicans in the Senate twiddle their thumbs, thousands of Michigan workers and citizens will continue to suffer from exposures to toxic chemicals," Tobey said. Right to Know legislation has been before the Senate for almost a year, during which time six Michigan workers have died from acute chemical exposures.

"How many more people have to die? How many more people have to get cancer? How much more environmental contamination must we endure before Sen. Cruce and Sen. Engler decide to take some action?" asked Tobey.

THE HOUSE version was supported by Maxine Berman of Southfield.

Opposed were Republicans W.V. Brotherton of Farmington, Mat Dumasak of Lake Orion and Jack Kirksey of Livonia. Ruth McNamee of Birmingham was absent.

'Several unions are seeking superfluous regulations that list over 65,000 materials — including salt, sand and water — as potentially hazardous.'

— State Sen. Doug Cruce

Computer literacy is state board's goal

"Better Education for Michigan Citizens: A Blueprint for Action" was recently adopted by the State Board of Education.

The "blueprint" includes three basic areas of concern: 1) school improvements, 2) recommendations to local and intermediate school districts, the governor, Legislature and institutions of higher education and 3) recent actions of the State Board of Education. Each area included several key assumptions related to science and technology. In their recommendations to local and intermediate school districts, the state board recommended that two years of mathematics, including at least one course covering algebraic concepts, be required of all students. The state board also recommended two years of science.

Furthermore, the state board recommended one-half year of "hands on" computer education to be taught in all Michigan public schools.

THE STATE'S study found that 23 percent of Michigan students took a course in computer education, and 86 percent of the Michigan public surveyed favored requiring a course in computer science/literacy.

The board also recommended one additional year of math — including algebra, geometry, advanced algebra and trigonometry — for students planning to go on to a four-year college or university. This would be in addition to biology, chemistry and physics.

As part of the plan, the State Board of Education will take actions to improve the quality of textbooks and instructional materials by assisting local staffs in assessing instructional materials, including computer software.

Furthermore, the state board will establish a set of standards for science and laboratory equipment in both elementary and secondary schools.

IN THE AREA of computer technology, the state board will serve as a resource center for Michigan educators to review and preview instructional software.



high tech
Ronald R. Watcke

In addition, the state will define minimum competencies in computer literacy for those students who seek employment in technology, as well as for high school completion. The state will set standards for the certification of teachers of computer literacy and computer science, as well as standards for certification of all teachers in the use of computers.

The state board plans to provide training for teachers in classroom applications of computer technology and for administrators in educational management positions.

It was further recommended that the state board evaluate the levels of computer literacy within the state and recommend to the governor and Legislature a proposal for funding computer software, training and equipment.

Lastly, the State Board of Education is developing performance objectives and materials for computer literacy education.

IMPRESSIVE as these recommendations sound, I believe they fall to far enough.

If the state of Michigan and its public education program are to remain at the forefront of providing the highest quality of education to the citizenry, then the State Board of Education must assert itself as a progressive change agent interested in the future as well as the present. The commitment must be made if Michigan is successfully to compete in attracting high technology industries to the state.

If you would like a copy of the 25-page report on "Better Education for Michigan Citizens: A Blueprint for Action," contact the Michigan State Board of Education at PO Box 3000, Lansing 48909.

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