

Hearings turn up voter registration snafus

By Kathy Parrish
staff writer

Voter registration isn't the hottest topic for a public hearing. But there hasn't been a dull moment for the Senate committee looking into the subject statewide.

A Saginaw Township hearing last week focused on a computer snafu there resulting in incorrect counting of Aug. 7 primary votes.

And a Detroit session Tuesday brought more — a printing error in absentee voter instructions for the Michigan Supreme Court race; charges that underage and mentally impaired voters are being registered; and a newspaper report that Detroit's list of active registered voters is at least 30 percent inaccurate.

"IT IS IMPERATIVE that the citizens of Michigan be assured that the sanctity of the ballot box is secure," said Sen. John Engler, R-Mt. Pleasant. The Senate majority leader heads the bipartisan study of voter registration and election procedures around the state.

"We cannot allow anything less. Every qualified citizen should have the right to vote. But it is their right to

make sure that their vote is not cancelled out by someone who is not qualified to vote."

Originally intended as a look at voter registration and election procedures in general, the hearings so far have revolved around irregularities.

ENGLER SAID a "disturbing pattern of events" have surfaced in the media since the study started in October. He cited registration of underage voters at a Detroit high school, the instruction sheet error, questions about security of tabulation procedures for punch card ballots and concerns about methods of registering physically and mentally handicapped people.

He stressed the committee does not intend to "raise the suspicion of or to uncover criminal fraud." Instead, it wants to see if legislation is needed to prevent the possibility of fraud or intentional tampering with the election process in the future.

IN MCGREGOR HALL at Wayne State University, the Detroit-area hearing focused mainly on printing errors in instructions to some absentee voters. On hand to discuss the issue were local and state elections officials.

As required by law, the names of

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candidates are rotated so they are not always in the same position on the ballot. Detroit has 10 separate ballot rotations for the Nov. 5 general election.

While the names of Supreme Court Justice James Brickley and challenger Wayne County Circuit Court Judge James Hathaway were rotated, their designations weren't.

To make it clear to voters who is the incumbent and who is the challenger, 20,000 new instruction sheets and ballots were sent out in marked envelopes. The first ballots were to be discarded, although probably only 40 percent of those inaccurately described Hathaway as an incumbent Supreme Court justice.

"THIS IS THE first time since 1946 that there's been an error sent out to

until well into the first week of July," Tungate explained. The Plymouth Township resident said the clerk's office has worked seven days a week 16 hours daily June 19-Aug. 3.

"We feel those pressures contributed to errors we found on the Nov. ballot."

JEFF BLAINE, deputy Detroit city clerk, assured the Senate committee all precautions are being taken to see that voting is proper. He said an "audit trail" will keep track of the absentee ballots in case of court action. Blaine said it would not be possible for his office to comply with the state Elections Division director's request that the ballot be divided into three groups — the invalid ballots, the substitute ballots and regular ballots.

Wayne County Clerk James Killen asked the legislature to eliminate rotation this year because of time pressures on his office stemming from the Michigan Supreme Court decision to return house districts to 1982 boundaries.

"The final ballot was not certified

ed ballots," he added.

STEVE FETTER, Senate majority counsel, presented preliminary results of a study his office is doing on voter accuracy.

In a selective mailing, 20,000 letters were sent out to see if voters are actually living at the addresses they registered at.

The rate of non-deliverable mail ranged from 2 percent in Mt. Clemens and 4 percent in Holland to four percent in Pontiac which had a 42-percent return rate.

Fetter said the goal is to see how accurate state voter lists are and how to be sure qualified people vote.

"It seems to me this is a concern of every voter in this state — no matter where they live — that the sanctity of the voter box be retained," he said firmly.

Oakland U seeks funds for library expansion

A request for \$1,425,000 to begin construction of a Kresge Library addition is the top priority in Oakland University's proposed \$4.3 million outlay budget for fiscal 1985-86.

The university also filed a general fund operating request of \$47.8 million, an increase of \$4.3 million over 1984-1985.

OU officials said the requested increases would cover only new needs that face the institution in 1985-1986 and don't address previous underfunding.

SOME \$2,850,000 of the proposed budget increase would be spent on non-program costs, salary and wage adjustments, \$2,025,000; added utility costs, \$345,000; general inflation and non-personnel costs, \$480,000.

New program requests include: \$400,000 for computer-aided design and computer-aided manufacturing systems for the School of Engineering and Computer Science; \$110,000 for a Center for Skill Development to pro-

vide individualized, diagnostic, tutorial and counseling support to disadvantaged and underachieving students.

Also, \$400,000 to upgrade academic computing facilities; \$472,000 in scientific and professional equipment; \$281,000 for a financial management information system; and \$41,800 to provide personnel, equipment and specialized needs for disadvantaged students.

TOTAL COST of OU's requested capital projects would run \$23.8 million, but the university is asking for slightly more than \$4 million funding in the next fiscal year.

In priority order, the projects are: \$1,425,000 to start construction on a 77,000 gross-square-foot addition to Kresge Library; \$200,000 for planning a proposed \$11.1 million science building; \$1 million as part of a \$3 million project to add robotics and advanced automation labs to Dodge Hall.

Also, \$419,000 to renovate the first floor of Vandenberg Hall West for a

health sciences facility; and \$240,000 to modify the Honeywell control system and expand the energy management system.

Also requested are \$70,000 to repair below-grade water leaks at Wilson Hall, Hollie Lepley Sports Center, and Varner Hall; \$150,000 for an addition to the risk management and purchasing department; \$150,000 for a computer center renovation; \$80,000 to modify elevators for handicapped students; \$40,000 to repair and replace exterior stairways at Varner and Hannah Halls; \$180,000 for roof repair at North Foundation Hall; \$150,000 to install a chilled-water loop between Kresge Library, Dodge and Hannah halls; and \$345,000 to air-condition Hannah Hall.

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