

Food stamp savings sought

Thursday, November 22, 1984 O&E

(O&E)

The Michigan Senate has given bipartisan approval to a bill aimed at reducing the cost of distributing food stamps.

It approved 34-1 a bill to build competition into the system by directing the state to accept bids before contracting with agencies to distribute food stamps.

"This is a crucial bill that stands to save Michigan \$1 million a year," said Sen. R. Robert Geake, R-Northville, the bill's sponsor. Geake chairs the Senate appropriations subcommittee which oversees social services spending.

"This would be the first competitive bid law in the country if it passes. I believe it could ultimately serve as a model for other states and save mil-

lions of dollars nationwide," Genke said. "I hope the House leadership will take that into account in their actions over the next month."

SUPPORTING the bill were area Sens. Doug Cruce, R-Troy, William Faust, D-Westland, Richard Feaster, R-West Bloomfield, Rudy Nichols, R-Waterford, and Patrick McCollough, D-Dearborn.

Sen. Jack Faxon, D-Farmington Hills, had an excused absence.

Lone dissenter was Congressmen-elect Paul Henry, R-Grand Rapids.

Food stamps are distributed to 421,000 households and more than one million individuals in Michigan. The bill would affect the 17 most populous counties, including Wayne and Oak-

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land, and about 85 percent of the recipients. The other 15 percent would receive food stamps by mail. Under the bill, contracts to distribute food stamps would be awarded on the basis of cost and ability to provide protections for the consumer. Contracts would be for one year and renewable, with allowances for inflation, for four consecutive years. They would be rebid after five years.

CURRENTLY, THE U.S. Postal Service charges the state \$1.72 per transaction, and other agencies charge an average of \$1.10, Geake said. He argued that by receiving bids, the state could reduce the cost to 75-95 cents per transaction with an average of about 88 cents.

Each 10-cent reduction will save the state nearly \$500,000 annually, he added.

Agencies bidding on contracts must provide barrier-free access to the handicapped and be within 1,000 feet of a bus route or public transportation line.

Yule program at park

"Pine Cone Christmas," a public interpretive program, will be held from 10 a.m. to noon Saturday, Dec. 1, in Independence Oaks County park, Clarkston.

Assistant parks naturalist Lynn Conover will present how to construct an all natural pine cone Christmas wreath. She also will give background

on cone-bearing trees. Participants must bring a grocery bag of pine cones for wreath-making. All other materials will be provided.

Cost of the program is \$2.50 per vehicle for Oakland County residents, \$4 for non-residents, plus \$2 per person. Pre-registration is required. For more information, call 858-0903.

Planners back hospital certification

The Comprehensive Health Planning Council of Southeastern Michigan (CHPC-SEM) Executive Committee has approved a certificate of need for Southwest Detroit Hospital, the private firm which has leased the former Wayne County General Hospital with an option to purchase.

The regional planning agency's approval was needed as a step in the procedure for Wayne County to shed itself of the deficit-plagued hospital in Westland.

The executive committee's decision reversed the Oct. 24 recommendation of CHPC-SEM's project review committee, which had recommended disapproval.

Southwest Detroit Hospital is leasing the former county hospital with an option to purchase the \$15 million facility.

The CHPC-SEM board approved four applications for certificates of need:

• Michigan Osteopathic Medical Center (MOMC) — closure of Lakeshore Hospital and 61-bed expansion at Michigan Osteopathic Medical Center. Total project cost: \$18.9 million.

• Peoples Community Hospital Authority (PCHA), Annapolis Hospital, Wayne — steam absorption chiller replacement/conversion. Total project cost: \$400,000.

• University Hospitals, Ann Arbor — Amendment to replacement hospital contract for the addition of the Burn Center. Cost increase: \$7.3 million.

• University Hospitals — magnetic resonance imaging project. Total capital cost: \$1.8 million.

The executive committee's approval of the applications from Michigan Osteopathic Medical Center, PCHA and Annapolis Hospital also reversed the decisions of CHPC-SEM's project review committee, which had recommended disapproval.

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