

Senate bill targets voter 'deadwood'

A bill to help city and township clerks clear "deadwood" from their voter registration rolls has cleared the Michigan Senate and is awaiting action in the House this week.

The Senate last week gave 23-8 approval to a bill by Sen. R. Robert Geake, R-Northville. It was sent to the House Elections Committee.

The Senate bill would:

- Allow clerks to purge the names of voters who have been inactive for five years. Clerks would have to try to notify these persons in writing, giving them 30 days to request reinstatement.

- Increase the time period during which a person could be considered registered without voting from four years to five.

AN EARLIER, related bill was vetoed by Lt. Gov. Martha Griffiths, who was acting governor in the absence of Gov. James J. Blanchard.

That bill created a so-called "two-tier system" in which voters would be kept on the rolls five years, then placed on an inactive list for five years. At the end of a total of 10 years, the inactive voter could be removed from the rolls without notice.

Griffiths' veto message said she could not approve of the lack of uniformity in the two-tier system or the

disenfranchisement of voters without notice.

"My bill addresses both of these difficulties," said Geake, "while at the same time vastly improving the efficiency of Michigan's voter registration system."

GEAKE'S BILL received bipartisan support from area suburban senators, including William Faust, D-Westland, Richard Foster, R-West Bloomfield, Rudy Nichols, R-Waterford, and Patrick McCollough, D-Dearborn.

Absent were Sens. Doug Cruce, R-Troy, and Jack Faxon, D-Farmington Hills.

Dissenting votes were cast by eight Detroit and outstate Democrats.

The idea for the bill came from Plymouth Township Clerk Esther Hulsing. It was supported by township and municipal governmental associations and opposed by the AFL-CIO.

"The papers have been filled with stories of voting irregularities and registration problems for a long time," said Geake, who called his bill "a major first step" to cleaning up the registration rolls.

He cited a mail survey of city of Pontiac voters which showed more than 40 percent of the mailings were undeliverable because the address was faulty or the person had moved.

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Thursday, November 22, 1984 O&E

(BWT:8, FRA)

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