

House passes voter list bill

With strong suburban support, the state House of Representatives passed a bill aimed at "cleaning up voter registration lists," according to its sponsor.

The House last week passed 64-31 Sen. R. Robert Geake's bill to purge inactive voters from the rolls. The Senate passed it 23-8 in mid-November.

The next question is whether it will be signed by Gov. James J. Blanchard.

SUGGESTED BY Plymouth Township Clerk Esther Hulsing, Senate Bill 85 would:

- o Allow the names of inactive voters to be purged from the active voter list after five years.

- o Requires city and township clerks to notify the voter in writing of his cancelled registration.

- o Allows the voter 30 days to ask for reinstatement.

- o Increases the period of time in which a person can be considered registered without voting from four years to five.

- o Eliminates the "inactive" voter list, a secondary list which clerks had to maintain for six years after moving persons out of the "active" list. Thus, there will be only one list of registered voters.

"MY BILL HAD strong bipartisan and bicameral support, with the leadership of all four caucuses voting for it," Geake said.

"We also had conceptual approval from the Secretary of State's office and endorsements from organizations like the Michigan Clerks and Michigan Townships Association, and numerous jury commissions."

The state AFL-CIO had opposed the bill at the Senate committee level but remained quiet as it made its way through the full Senate and House. It was unknown whether the labor federation would lobby Blanchard to veto it.

Here is how area representatives voted:

Yes — John Bennett, D-Redford; W.V. Brotherton, R-Farmington; Mat Dunaskiss, R-Lake Orion; William Keith, D-Garden City; Jack Kirksey, R-Livonia; Gerald Law, R-Plymouth; and Gordon Sparks, R-Troy.

No — Maxine Berman, D-Southfield.

Not voting — Justine Barns, D-Westland; Ruth McNamee, R-Birmingham; Wilfred Webb, D-Hazel Park.

Most area reps like seat belt bill

State Rep. William Keith, D-Garden City, broke ranks with most suburban lawmakers as the Michigan House of Representatives defeated a bill to require motorists to wear automobile seat belts.

Nine other area lawmakers supported the bill, which sponsor David Hollister, D-Lansing, admitted is "done for now."

"My phone's been ringing off the hook 2-1 in favor of the way I voted," said Keith, a 42-year veteran of the House. "My constituents just didn't want the state forcing them to wear it. They just resent government coming into their cars and telling them what to do."

"My wife's with the Michigan Dental Association, and they're very much for it. If anyone's been beating me over the head with it, it's her," he laughed.

Keith added the bill violated an ancient political principle: that laws should protect a person from society but not attempt to protect an individual from himself.

THE HOUSE voted 52-49 in favor of mandating seat belts, four short of the 56 needed for passage.

Hollister said he would reintroduce the bill in the new session of the Legislature in 1985. "The issue will not go away," he said.

The bill split both parties. Democrats lined up 27-28 against it. Republicans were 25-21 in favor.

Nine representatives didn't vote, among them Rep. Wilfred Webb, D-Hazel Park, whose district includes part of Troy. Webb said he had "mixed views" on the bill and would have provided the 56th vote if Hollister could have lined up 55 supporting votes.

AREA DEMOCRATS favoring the bill were John Bennett of Redford and Maxine Berman of Southfield.

Area Republicans favoring it were W.V. Brotherton of Farmington, Mat Dunaskiss of Lake Orion, Jack Kirksey of Livonia, Gerald Law of Plymouth Township, Robert McGee of Commerce Township, Ruth McNamee of Birmingham and Gordon Sparks of Troy.

Hollister said he will retain amendments which were designed to soften the bill's impact. These include phasing in the fines courts could levy and not assessing "points" against a driver's record.

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