

Sparks' switch helps save Blanchard veto

By Tim Richard
staff writer

If Right to Life wants to end state-funded abortions in Michigan, it will have to compromise with Rep. Gordon Sparks, R-Troy.

Last month Sparks supported a bill to halt Medicaid abortions, but switched Tuesday and voted to uphold Gov. James J. Blanchard's veto of the measure.

"I'd want the compromise in place before we voted again," Sparks said after the House members cast 72 votes in

favor of overriding the veto — two votes short of the required two-thirds majority.

There were 32 votes against override with six members not voting.

IT WAS A stunning setback for the anti-abortion Right to Life of Michigan, which sought to cut \$8.3 million from the state social services budget by banning Medicaid funding of an estimated 19,000 abortions for welfare recipients.

House Bill 4007 had passed the lower chamber by a 77-34 vote on Feb. 5. Sparks voted for it but, with a handful of other members, also supported sev-

eral amendments designed to soften the effects of the ban.

Right to Life, however, wanted a "clean," one-paragraph bill with no amendments. That turned out to be a tactical mistake, at least as far as Sparks was concerned.

"Rep. Joe Young's amendment seemed to have the most support," Sparks said. Young, D-Detroit, sought to take the \$8.3 million saved on Medicaid abortions and use it for "alternatives to abortion" such as school programs, counseling for pregnant women, adoption programs, family planning, prenatal and postnatal care.

The Young amendment was defeated 51-43. Several similar amendments lost by even wider margins.

EXCEPT FOR Sparks, other area representatives voted the same as they did on Feb. 5.

Favoring the override, and thus favoring the cutoff of Medicaid abortions, were Democrats John Bennett of Redford, William Keith of Garden City and James Kosteva of Canton; and Republicans W.V. Brotherton of Farmington, Mal Dunasies of Lake Orion, Gregory Gruse of Troy and Gerald Law of Plymouth Township.

Backing the Blanchard veto were Democrats Justine Barnes of Westland and Maxine Berman of Southfield; and Republicans David Hodgman of West Bloomfield and Jack Miller of Birmingham, along with Sparks.

Kosteva, the freshman from Canton, voted with Sparks for several of the amendments but continued to support the basic bill.

THE VOTE placed two representatives from Troy on opposite sides of the issue.

Gruse, a freshman whose district includes the southeastern portion of Troy and Madison Heights, said he "did some polling and found 60 percent are against Medicaid funding for abortions." His random telephone survey of 220 residents was done two months ago, he said.

Gruse said the districts are different, with his southern district having a higher unemployment rate, more blue-collar workers and more Catholics than Sparks' district, which includes the greater Rochester area.

Sparks said a survey commissioned by "a variety of groups" showed his district was 85-percent "pro-choice" and evenly split on Medicaid-funded abortions.

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— Rep. Gordon Sparks
Troy Republican

ple," said Sparks, a second-term House member.

ANOTHER FACTOR in the failure of the override may have been Right to Life's plans to back Democratic candidate Stephen Montma for a vacant state Senate seat in the Grand Rapids area. The RFL plan reportedly angered some Republicans.

For example, Rep. Edgar Goerlings, R-Muskegon County, supported the bill Feb. 5 but was absent for Tuesday's override vote. For practical purposes, an absence amounts to a negative vote because only the "yes" votes really count on final passage of a bill and on an override attempt.

The Senate passed the bill 25-8 and is expected to have the votes to override. Senate action, if any, isn't expected until next week.

The Legislature has passed the bill 13 times under two governors, and all five override attempts have failed.

Rags to riches \$200 turns into \$158 million for Perry Drugs

By Kathy Parrish
staff writer

AT \$75 a letter, Jack Robinson's last name on a store sign would have cost \$600.

So the Bloomfield Hills resident named his Pontiac pharmacy after the street it was on — Perry.

"It was more economical to go with the location. Only five letters and \$225 savings," Robinson kiddingly told some 200 Perry Drug Stores stockholders Tuesday during the company's 12th annual meeting in Troy.

"I've been watching stockholders' money ever since."

BACKING UP that claim, Robinson reported all-time highs in sales and earnings for the Pontiac-based drug store chain.

Started in 1957 at Perry and East Boulevard with \$200 in assets, Perry Drug Store Inc. now is worth more than \$158 million.

Its three divisions — drugstores, auto parts and health care — operate 148 drugstores, 185 discount auto parts stores and three health care companies in eight states. And there are plans to open 15 more drugstores and 30 auto parts stores.

In fiscal 1984, Perry Drug sales were more than \$372 million — up 30 percent from the previous year. Earnings hit \$7.6 million, an increase of 68 percent over fiscal 1983.

Earnings per share were \$1.26, a 34-percent increase over the 94 cents of the 1983 period. About 80 percent of the earnings were reinvested.

Since closing its books for 1984, Perry also acquired the Apex Drug Stores in metropolitan Detroit. That did not affect its operating results. Sales for



Jack A. Robinson
fast growth pace

1985 are projected for just short of \$500 million.

Stockholders this week voted to increase the number of shares of common stock from 10 million to 30 million and preferred shares from 1 million to 5 million.

RECOUNTING THE company's aggressive expansion efforts, the company chairman said the activity is part of a carefully drafted five-year strategic plan. Expansion cost the company more than \$12 million in 1984.

It's a fast pace for a company which added one store yearly between 1964 and 1973 when it went public to raise capital. Perry broke into the auto parts market in 1976 and has been growing steadily since.

"Perry has never been a company

which has been impulsive or — as they say — one which shoots from the hip," said Robinson.

"What we have done during the last few years is to carefully prepare ourselves for the future."

LOOKING TOWARD the future, Perry has diversified its offerings. While pharmacies still continue as the "heart" of the company, it has determined to become a major force in the Midwest auto parts market.

Last year, it decided to provide customers with a single source for health care needs like prescriptions, clinical laboratory tests and medical equipment.

Behind the move are increasing cost controls in the health care industry, leading to earlier patient discharge and a move toward HMOs, preferred provider and other arrangements.

The new Health Care Division acquired Bioanalytical Procedures, a Dearborn company which offers comprehensive clinical testing services and laboratory management to doctors, nursing homes and hospitals.

Perry also moved into the home health care market by acquiring Flint Medical and Surgical Supply. With the Henry Ford Health Care Corp., it formed Perry ComfortCare.

"AT PERRY we believe that change always brings opportunity and we've maintained the flexibility to adapt quickly to change so we can exploit the opportunities," said Alvin Wander, a West Bloomfield resident who is executive vice president and treasurer.

Perry President Donald Fox attributed the company's financial accomplishments to improvements in operations.

Among these are expansion of the Waterford Township warehouse, new material handling equipment in distribution centers, computerized pharmacies, new data processing equipment, a system which schedules Perry People on duty according to traffic flow, and a check-out-counter productivity study to develop a plan to reduce customer lines.

"We're reaching to what customers want," explained the West Bloomfield resident, who was the pharmacist in the second Perry Drug Store. "Unless we give them the right products at the right time we're not going to succeed."

DURING THE upbeat presentation, stockholders raised questions about the proposal to increase stock shares.

Robinson assured them it was not a stock split, but would allow a larger number of shares to be available.

"This should not affect the equity of the stockholder," Robinson told his investors.

Asked if Perry is considering expanding into Texas, the chairman said "We're very happy with eight states we serve."

A West Bloomfield High School student, at the annual meeting with members of his economics class, pressed Robinson about stock opportunities.

"If I'm gonna invest, do I want to hold off because Perry is acquiring more stores?" asked Joe Dacore, a senior at the school.

"I'm not an investor, but if you tap the shoulder of some of the people here they'd probably say 'Invest now — Don't Wait,'" Robinson said with a smile.

Pressed about other acquisitions, the company's founder said Perry is always interested in new stores.

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