

Legislators say they did well by education

Following up on the recently ended session of the Michigan Legislature:

FOR ALL their partisan wrangling, Michigan legislators think they did a good job on funding education, and the state's chief educator agrees.

John Engler, R-Mt. Pleasant, majority leader in the Republican-controlled Senate, said the Senate influence is apparent in the \$5.9 billion budget, which he said is "still too low and demands major cuts next year."

Nevertheless, higher education has new programs for job opportunity, technological training, research and development and incentives for excellence, Engler said.

With a 19-18 majority (one Republican seat is vacant because of a death), Engler said the upper chamber has

been "a more cohesive body than it has in years."

HOUSE SPEAKER Gary Owen, D-Ypsilanti, boasted the budget bill "provided an 11.7 percent increase in direct state funding of the schools, after the record increases reported in fiscal 1983-84 and 1984-85."

Owen credited economic recovery for the continued improvements. He said four-year colleges will receive an increase of 15.7 percent to \$770 million. The 29 community colleges will receive \$16 million more for a total of \$17.5 million.

Representative Engler said the Senate produced "innovations" in building competition to the medical program, containing health care costs and providing research-and-development incentives to attract industry. He also cited reform of the Essential Insurance

Act and new taxes for Detroit's expansion of Cobo Hall.

Democrat Owen cited a \$53 million outlay to begin construction of five new prisons. He also praised a 23 percent increase in the Natural Resources budget, much of it was for toxic cleanup.

STATE SCHOOL Superintendent Phillip Runkel called the budget — which gives \$2.5 billion in state funds to public schools — "the best school budget bills" in his five years in Lansing.

Direct school aid is \$1.8 billion, up \$192 million. It is distributed to local schools on a formula based on local property values, millage rates and enrollment.

Other elements are: \$147 million for special education, \$96 million for transportation, \$28 million for remedial

reading and math, and \$25.5 million for vocational aid.

The gifted-and-talented program received a hefty 55 percent increase — to \$2.1 million.

Runkel said the bill contains incentives to reduce class sizes in kindergarten, first grades and later in second and third grades. Districts will receive an extra \$5.35 per pupil if they keep class sizes at 25 or fewer or reduce class sizes at least 5 percent.

Cobo taxes split local delegation

Two tax increases to fund a \$180 million expansion of Detroit's Cobo Hall were opposed almost on party lines by Observer & Economic area legislators. Most Democrats supported

them and most Republicans were opposed. Here are the votes:

• **Liquor tax** — increased by 4 percent. Current rates are 8 percent by the glass and 2.85 percent by the bottle.

The Senate vote was 20-15. Supporting it were Democrats William Faust of Westland and Patrick McCollough of Dearborn Heights. Opposed were all four Republicans — Doug Cruce of Troy, Richard Fessler of West Bloomfield, Robert Geake of Northville and Rudy Nichols of Waterford — along with Democrat Jack Faxon of Farmington Hills.

The House vote was 56-43. Supporters were Democrats Justine Barnes of Westland, Maxine Berman of Southfield, William Keith of Garden City and James Kosteva of Canton, plus Republican Judith Miller of Birmingham.

Opposed were Democrat John Bennett of Redford and Republicans Lynn Banks of Livonia, Mai Dunaskis of Lake Orion, Gregory Gruse of Troy, David Hooligan of West Bloomfield, and Gordon Sparks of Troy.

Not voting were Republicans W.V. Brotherton of Farmington and Gerald Law of Plymouth Township.

• **Hotel tax** — increased by varying rates depending on number of rooms. Applied to most hotels and motels in Wayne, Oakland and Macomb counties. The Senate vote was 19-14. Democrat McCollough of Dearborn supported it. Opposed were Republicans Cruce

of Troy, Fessler of West Bloomfield, Geake of Northville, Nichols of Waterford, and Democrat Faxon of Farmington Hills. Not voting was Faust of Westland.

The House vote was 55-42. Local representatives voted the same way on the liquor tax as they did the hotel tax except Justine Barnes, who voted for the liquor tax but against the hotel tax, and Gerald Law, who did not vote on the liquor tax but voted against the hotel tax.

Auto insurance revision passed

Both houses finally approved revision in the state's 1981 Essential Insurance Act after strong criticism from insurance industry. The current law ties suburban rates to Detroit's, resulting in what the industry and suburban customers call a massive subsidy of Detroit customers.

The revision would put a ceiling on annual premium hikes in Detroit. The Detroit City Council is urging Gov. Blanchard to veto it.

The Senate vote was 25-8. Supporters included Democrat Faust of Westland and all four area Republicans. Only Democrat McCollough was opposed. The Democrat Faxon of Farmington Hills did not vote.

The House vote was 74-29.

Alliance sets economic 'turf' battle

By Teri Barnes
staff writer

A new coalition of private and government representatives has been launched in Oakland County aimed at boosting economic recovery and stimulating new business.

Its first chairman predicted the organization would serve to solidify interests and reduce "turfdom battles" over where a particular plant will locate.

Called the Oakland County Community Growth Alliance, the 40-member advisory and planning body is a response to a call to action by the Michigan State Department of Commerce. The state encouraged 30 of these groups to form across Michigan to stir regional development.

In Oakland County, representatives come mostly from local governments, local EDGs (economic development corporations), local chambers of commerce, with some members from colleges, universities, businesses and utilities. Two members represent labor (the UAW and the AFL-CIO).

"THE CONCEPT here is to set aside individual concerns and look at the county's needs, and if we can do that, then I think we can get something done," said Philip J. Meagher, the Oakland group's first chairman and the executive director of the Southfield Chamber of Commerce.

"The aimed is to unify the state," he said. "One reason the state developed this program was to do away with a divide-and-conquer approach. A certain amount of competition between local communities has to exist, but there's a point where it's self-defeating."

"If Auburn Hills, for instance, can't sell a particular high-tech plant, why shouldn't some other part of the state be aware of its interest. It's for everyone's advantage."

COUNTY EXECUTIVE Dan Murphy praised the group's formation and its effort to "consolidate the efforts of the hundred local economic development organizations in the county, as well as in the state."

Representatives met for the first

time in an organizational meeting earlier this month and elected officers. Besides Meagher, other elected officers include vice chairwoman Patricia Lewis of the Greater Rochester Chamber of Commerce and secretary Robert C. Dieball of Waterford Township.

Next meeting is scheduled for 8:30 a.m. Wednesday, Aug. 14, at Lawrence Institute of Technology, Southfield.

JOSEPH JOACHIM, director of the Oakland County Economic Development Group, is the group's non-voting executive director.

He said there are 26 separate EDGs, quasi-governmental groups that issue industrial revenue bonds in Oakland County, and some have difficulty initiating programs on their own.

The new group will help them by providing information and coordinating projects, Joachim said. It will have no hired staff but will receive staff support from the county's Economic Development Group.

In addition to increase cooperation among county agencies, he said the group will work to spot duplication of efforts and help pool resources.

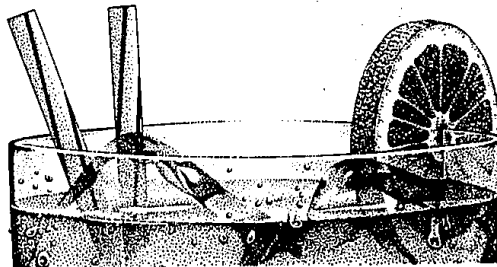
JOACHIM SAID the alliance has four key goals:

- To develop the area by retaining and attracting business.
- To establish a small business assistance program with a possible center for this purpose.
- To develop a procurement center where information on government contracts at federal and state levels would be made available to local small businesses. (Currently, interested local businesspersons are referred to a center operated by the Downriver

Community Conference, Oakland County had one year ago, but it was abandoned for lack of money, Joachim said.)

• To develop "incubator facilities" to nurture new businesses. Such centers subsidize new businesses by providing business space and some clerical staff until the business is running, he said.

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