

'A people's vote'

Income tax rate to roll back early

By Tim Richard
staff writer

Michigan lawmakers will carry the fight over the income tax rate into their re-election campaigns now that they have disposed of the issue in Lansing.

The state Senate Tuesday approved, 37-1, a House measure to roll the state income tax rate back to 4.6 percent effective this March 31. It has been 5.1 percent since last December and was as high as 6.35 percent in 1983.

"This has been one of the longest playing issues in politics," said Sen. Rudy Nichols, R-Waterford, a co-sponsor of the measure.

"This is a people's vote — grass roots representation at its best," said Nichols, whose district includes Rochester.

Nichols and Sen. Kirby Holmes, R-Utica, presided over a champagne luncheon following the vote. Their victories in special elections following the 1984 tax revolt gave Republicans 20-18 control of the Senate. And with the champagne corks popping, Nichols indicated the income tax would be an election year issue.

ALL SENATORS from the Observer & Eccentric arc supported Holmes' SB 77. The tax increase wasn't due to expire until Oct. 1, 1987.

"We originally had a permanent tax increase," said Sen. Doug Cruce, R-Troy. "We held some feet to the fire. Getting a rollback to March 31 was a significant victory."

The 18-months-early rollback will save Michigan income tax-payers \$650 million, according to Republican staff member Gary Wolfram.

The actual tax rate people will see on their 1986 state tax returns, however, will be about 4.72 percent — a combination of 4.6 percent for nine months and 5.1 percent for three months.

The rate was 4.6 percent when Blanchard took office in the recession year of 1983. Its high was 6.35 percent that year. It dropped to 6.1 percent in '84, then 5.35 on Sept. 1, 1984, and 5.1 as of last Dec. 1.

Nichols called the original 38-percent rate increase "too much for too long," indicating Republicans would make it an election-year issue.

DEMOCRATS WARNED the GOP against grabbing too much political credit.

"This is a far cry from March of 1983," said Sen. Patrick McColough, D-Deerborn, "when unemployment was 16 percent, when 17 percent were on welfare, and we faced closing of universities and layoffs of fire and policemen."

McColough, whose district includes Garden City, said President Reagan should follow Gov. James Blanchard's lead in submitting a balanced budget, adding:

"I see a drift by Republicans to the left in terms of fiscal responsibility, and a drift by Democrats to the right."

BOTH MCCOLLOUGH and Sen. R. Robert Geake, R-Northville, said they received "very little" mail in recent weeks about whether to roll the rate back effective Jan. 1, as Republicans had proposed, or March 31, the date offered by Blanchard and the Democrats.

"People aren't following the quibbling about the exact date," said Geake, whose district includes Livonia, Redford, Plymouth and Canton.

"People write only when they feel threatened," added McColough.

Republicans, such as Finance Chairman Norm Shinkle of Monroe County, repeatedly noted Blanchard "proposed a permanent tax increase and said he would veto a temporary hike."

SENATE MAJORITY Leader John Engler of Mount Pleasant said taxes will continue to be an issue because of a Senate staff finding that the Treasury collected too much in income and single business taxes last year. He called for a \$180-million pro rated refund to taxpayers.

"The Blanchard economic program consists in being governor while Ronald Reagan is president," said the Republican leader.

Shot back Democrat Lana Pollack of Ann Arbor: "If Gov. Blanchard had done like the president, we would be \$3.4 billion in deficit."

Sen. Joe Mack, D-Ironwood, said he hoped Republicans would show "the same attitude when it comes to Department of Natural Resources license fee increases for hunting and fishing."

The Senate's lone nay vote was cast by Jackie Vaughn III, D-Detroit. He argued there was too much "unemployment and suffering" and too little spent on "quality education, mental health and prisons" to justify a rollback.

Deadline nears for school applicants

Prospective candidates for the Farmington Public Schools superintendent post have about three weeks left to apply.

They must send a letter of application, a resume — personal and professional, and an up-to-date set of college credentials to the school board via a special for consideration, according to a brochure mailed to prospective candidates.

Application deadline for the key post is March 21. School board members will personally screen applications, making a decision in May or June. The search is being conducted nationally, according to information from the Michigan Association of School Boards (MASB), consultant in the search.

The brochure, sent to qualified applicants on the MASB mailing list, features a photo of Farmington's Forest Elementary, the same used 10 years ago when then-new superintendent Lewis Schutman was hired.

The board seeks an individual, according to the brochure, who:

- has a strong academic background; a commitment to excellence in all areas of education.

- has been both a teacher and an administrator. Successful central office experience is desirable.

- meets North Central requirements and has additional academic training.

- is capable of working effectively with the faculty, support staff, board of education and the community to achieve the goals of educational excellence.

- is knowledgeable in personnel and financial management.

- is an educational leader with excellent human relations skills.

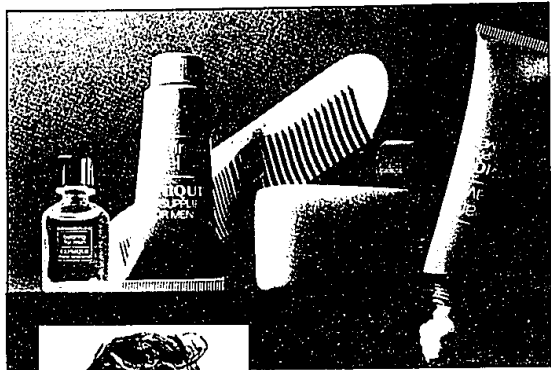
Salary and contract length was left open-ended in the brochure as "negotiable and commensurate with the qualifications of the candidate."

Day trip for adults in the works

The Farmington Hills Department of Special Services Recreation Division will host a chartered excursion to "Kelly and Company" and the Renaissance Center Thursday, March 20.

"Keeping Memory Fit After 40" will be among the topics covered by John Kelly and Marilyn Turner. Shopping at the Renaissance Center will follow.

The bus will leave the Farmington Hills Municipal Offices, 31555 11 Mile, at 7:15 a.m., and return at 4 p.m. Pre-register by March 7. The \$8 per person cost includes "Kelly and Company" and transportation to and from city hall. Call 474-6115 Ext. 290.



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