

# Regional school tax in talk stage until '87

By Tim Richard  
Staff writer

Don't look for fast action in the Michigan Legislature on bills to "regionalize" industrial tax base to the benefit of poorer school districts.

But do expect lawmakers to start work this year on major reforms in the property tax — the biggest source of revenue for suburban school districts, but one which homeowners consider the most onerous tax.

"It (the regional tax bill) is part of an overall goal we have as Senate Republicans to do something about high property taxes in this state," said Senate Majority Leader John Engler, R-Mt. Pleasant.

"I'm not sure there's sufficient support at this point," said Engler in an interview Sunday on the "Spotlight on News" program (WXYZ-TV).

THE IDEA is contained in bills sponsored by Sen. Dan DeGrow, R-Port Huron, in the upper chamber, and Reps. William Keith, D-Garden

City, and James O'Neill, D-Saginaw, in the lower.

Industrial and commercial properties worth \$20 million or more would be assessed by the state and placed in a "regional impact" category, according to DeGrow.

After 10 years, half the property tax revenues from this class would go into the state school aid fund and be distributed to all local districts under the school aid formula. It would be a form of statewide property tax collection.

The idea of sharing industrial property taxes across a large area is at least 25 years old. It pops up at outstate Farm Bureau meetings, usually with the suggestion that industrial taxes be allocated county-wide.

"In Michigan," said DeGrow, "huge disparities can exist between schools like Birmingham, levying 30 mills and providing \$5,502 per pupil, and Martin, levying 30 mills and providing \$2,394 per pupil" in 1985-6.

LIVONIA SCHOOL officials, in

particular, are upset at the bill, declaring one-fifth of the district's tax base would have to be shared. Livonia has seen a building boom, led by hotels and high-tech firms, along the I-75 corridor.

DeGrow said only 15 of the state's 569 school districts would lose any funding. "Most" districts would be helped, he said.

Engler said DeGrow "has put it in, with himself as the only sponsor, simply to generate some discussion. Not all suburban school districts probably would be harmed by this legislation.

"DeGrow would like it to be part of the debate.

"It will take some time to calculate what he's talking about," the Senate GOP leader said. "Let's let the Senate talk about it and then face the constituents."

WHILE LEGISLATORS campaign for re-election, Engler said, consultants and non-politicians appointed by the Senate will make a new study of the property tax, schools' depend-

ence on it, assessing practices and senior citizens' burdens.

Engler said Senate Republicans won't consider Democratic Gov. James J. Blanchard's "tax fairness" plan, which the Republican called more of a tax increase plan since it would raise taxes on insurance premiums and bank services.

"It (Blanchard's) wasn't a property tax program at all. It was a tax hike. The Senate will continue to be vigilant on tax hikes. The tax issue is a Republican issue," Engler said.

He called it "extremely unlikely" the House and Senate would compromise on their rival property tax rebate plans in time for Dec. 1 bills to be reduced.

"The House hasn't even given our senior citizens property tax cut proposal a hearing," he said.

In earlier announcements, Engler suggested that in 1987 lawmakers consider placing a "tax shift" proposal on the ballot. Property taxes for schools would be cut in return for an increase in the sales tax rate, currently 4 percent.



## Reynolds heads OCC board again

On the second ballot, Suzanne Reynolds of West Bloomfield Township won a new two-year term challenging the Oakland Community College Board of Trustees.

The vote Monday was 5-0 with vice chair Sandra Ritter of Water-

ford abstaining and Margaret MacTavish of Rochester Hills absent.

The first ballot ended in a 3-3 tie. Reynolds was supported by holdover trustees Earl Anderson and Douglas Wakefield. Ritter was backed by the newly elected trustees, Norma Ross of Madison Heights and Judith Wiser of Southfield.

The OCC board, in a brief organizational meeting, re-elected Ritter by acclamation as vice chair and Anderson as secretary. Ritter also was elected to represent OCC on the

Michigan Community Colleges Association board, with Ross as her alternate.

Wiser, who topped the field in the June 9 election, was elected delegate to the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments, a seven-county planning agency which OCC is joining for the first time. College Chancellor R. Stephen Nicholson was elected alternate.

Regular meetings of the OCC board are held at 8 p.m. the fourth Thursday of each month at the ad-

ministrative center, 2480 Opdyke, Bloomfield Hills.

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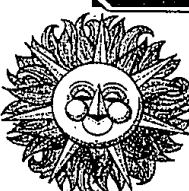
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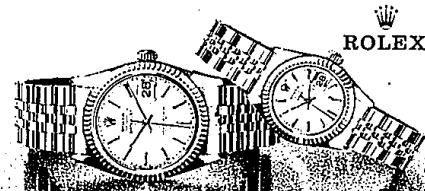
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