

Judges, state elected officials up for raises

By Rebecca Haynes
Staff writer

The State Officers Compensation Commission is again considering pay raises for state elected officials and a spokesman said the commission wants comments from the public before any decisions are made.

The commission will conduct a public hearing at 7 p.m. Wednesday in the Law Building Auditorium, Capitol Complex, Lansing.

"This commission is placing a special importance on public input," said Edmund Perkowski, executive assistant to SOCC. Its hearing has been widely advertised.

"They really are representing the will of the people, and if they don't hear from them, it makes it rather difficult to make a decision."

The commission meets every other year and this year will determine salaries for 1987 and 1988. A final decision and recommendation must be sent to the state Legislature by Dec. 31.

WHATEVER SALARY figure the compensation commission decides on for state supreme court justices will determine the salaries of almost all judges in Oakland County and will affect, to some degree, the county and local budgets.

"There's a rippling effect," says Oakland County Commissioner Marilyn Gosling.

By law, the salaries of circuit, probate and district court judges salaries are pegged to the salary of Supreme Court Justices.

Gosling, R-Bloomfield Hills, said

she will send a letter to the compensation commission. "I'm going to ask them to give consideration to the effect on local jurisdictions," she said. Presently Supreme Court Justices are paid \$81,400 with circuit judges pegged at 92 percent of that and probate and district judges pegged at 88 percent of the justice salaries.

Although the state pays the bulk of all judges' salaries, local jurisdictions do contribute a portion.

CURRENT SALARIES for top elected officials are:

- Governor, \$85,800.
- Lieutenant governor, \$58,850.
- State legislator, \$36,520.

Supplemental salaries for legislators include: \$18,000 for the speaker of the House; \$10,000 for the Senate majority leader; \$14,000 for the Senate and House minority leaders; \$7,500 for the Senate and House majority floor leaders; \$6,000 for the Senate and House minority floor leaders; and \$3,000 for the Senate and House Appropriations Committee chairs.

The compensation commission's decision will take effect Jan. 1. The state Legislature has until Feb. 1 to accept or reject it. The Legislature has never rejected the compensation commission recommendations.

If a recommendation should be rejected, state officials would be paid at their current rate for the next two years, until the commission is scheduled to meet again.

THOSE WHO can't be in Lansing for the hearing may telephone or write by Dec. 3 to have their opinions considered by the commission.

Comments should be addressed to Edmund Perkowski, State Officers Compensation Commission, Department of Civil Service, Lewis Cass Building, Lansing, Mich. 48909.

Before the hearing, the commission will listen to governmental officials explain recommended changes in compensation figures.

The commission also is scheduled to hear comments from economists on how the state is expected to fare financially during the next two years.

AN IN-DEPTH comparison of salaries and benefits for similar positions in other states, the education and training needed to perform the job, job responsibilities, the current financial condition of the state and the cost-of-living are all factors that will be taken into account when making the salary recommendations, Perkowski said.

"The committee hasn't given any kind of an indication yet on which way they're leaning," Perkowski said. "What they're going to do is anybody's guess."

No pay increases were granted during the early 1980s when the state was experiencing severe financial problems. Five percent raises were granted in 1984 and 1985.

"I'm sure they (the SOCC) will consider things such as General Motors' recent cutback decision and the impact it'll have on the state," he said.

MICHIGAN'S salaries for elected officials are above the average of other states. But that gap is closing as large pay increases have been

granted in other states.

"Down through the years I'd say the salaries for the state legislators elicit the largest amount of comment from the public," Perkowski said.

"These comments are usually negative, with people saying their particular legislator doesn't do anything for them or isn't very effective."

"The commission isn't deciding the salaries based on the person who

holds the job. They're deciding based on the job responsibilities. State legislators have a lot of responsibility and they do things that affect all of us."

A VOTER who is unhappy with the job a legislator is doing and thinks he or she does not deserve the salary can use the ballot box to oust that person, he said.

"The commission has so many

things to consider, and if we keep salaries low like the public seems to want, we really restrict the people who are able to go for the jobs," Perkowski said.

"Many of these positions, such as a Supreme Court Justice, are supposed to be the crowning achievement of someone's career."

(Staff writer Tim Richard contributed to this report).

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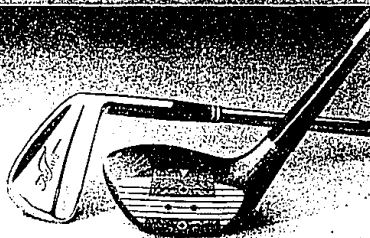
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