

Special state panel tackles abortion vote

A special committee of the Michigan Legislature has been formed to examine placing the issue of state-funded abortions before voters, and now to go about it.

It could lead to voters' being given the final say on whether their tax dollars should be used to pay for abortions. That would end a 15-year legislative battle.

But there were indications that anti-abortion lawmakers were split over what strategy to pursue.

The part of the Medicaid budget covering welfare abortions has enough money to last until March 15.

MISSING FROM the panel will be Sen. R. Robert Geake, R-Northville. He heads the Senate appropriations subcommittee which handles the Medicaid budget and sponsored one resolution calling for an April 6 special election. That resolution passed the Senate but was lost in the House.

"It was my wish," Geake said. "I'm responsible for the whole Medicaid program. This panel is advisory."

A special committee comprised of five senators and five representatives will examine the referendum question, including when a vote should be held, the wording of ballot language and what the referendum would cover.

Members will include the four caucus leaders: Sen. John Engler, R-Mount Pleasant, Sen. Art Miller, D-Warren, House Speaker Gary Owen, D-Ypsilanti, and GOP leader-elect Paul Hillegeons, R-Holland.

One suburban member of the panel will be Rep. Shirley Johnson, R-Royal Oak.

The panel is balanced 5-5 between "pro life" and "pro choice" lawmakers. It must issue a report by Feb. 15.

Wellborn said he and other anti-abortion lawmakers are split on referendum strategy.

Some think voters should only determine whether to continue pay-

ing for welfare women's abortions through Medicaid. Others believe a ballot question should address all taxpayer-funded abortions, including those available through government health plans, he said.

"I think we've got an iron-clad commitment to get a referendum on the ballot, and I'm happy about that," Engler told reporters. An Engler aide characterized the commitment as a "gentlemen's agreement" between Engler and House Speaker Gary Owen.

But Owen, D-Ypsilanti, said he didn't guarantee there would be a referendum. "Most people assume a ballot proposal is the only way to resolve this issue," he said.

IN AN EMERGENCY session, lawmakers approved a \$412.4 mil-

lion Medicaid spending.

The House vote was 71-21. The breakdown of Oakland County area lawmakers:

• Yes (3) — Maxine Derman, D-Southfield; Gregory Gruse, R-Madison Heights, and Judith Miller, R-Birmingham.

• No (3) — Republicans Wilbur Brotherton of Farmington, Mat Dunaskis of Lake Orion and Gordon Sparks of Troy.

• Absent (3) — David Honigman, R-West Bloomfield. (An absence has the effect of being a no vote because 56 yes votes are required for passage.)

The Senate vote was 32-6. All Observer & Eccentric area senators voted yes.

The Associated Press contributed to this report.

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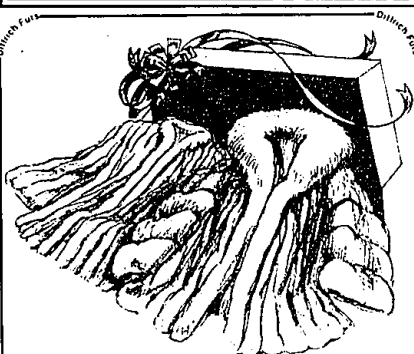
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Children's Village gets arts grant

A grant from the National Endowment for the Arts, with matching funds from Oakland County, is being used to sponsor an arts program at Oakland County's Children's Village.

Oakland County Cultural Arts Council and Children's Village have joined to sponsor an arts program to teach teenagers pencil drawing, copper design and arts and crafts. The program will run until the end of the year.

"We are encouraged by the response and enthusiasm the children have given this opportunity, and we hope a permanent program will be available for the continued benefit of the children," said Virginia DeBennham Rodgers, director of Oakland cultural affairs.

"THE CULTURAL Arts Department and Children's Village have done an excellent job putting the grant from the NEA to its best possible use," said Daniel T. Murphy, Oakland County executive. "It is a pleasure seeing children given the opportunity to grow and develop."

Some 30 boys and girls are involved in the program at Children's Village. The classes are taught by local arts teacher Chris Botsas.

"The arts program here is designed to promote a camaraderie and sharing to our teenagers as well as teaching them art skills," said Greg Alessi, recreational specialist at the village.

"We hope to offer the youngsters an outlet for their natural talents and let them see the good things inside themselves," said Alessi.

THE LOCAL test program grant, which is continuing on matching funds from the county, also is being used to sponsor two other arts programs for children.

The first was the 4-H 1986 Summer Arts Festival held at four Pontiac community centers in August. An African Culture arts program will be offered in the near future.

Oakland Bar lauds Young

Joan E. Young, administrator of the Oakland Circuit Court, is 1986 winner of the Oakland County Bar Association's distinguished service award.

Bar president Frances Avadenka said it honored the Birmingham resident's work with a task force on improved dispute resolution. Young served as vice chair of the task force and is current co-chair of a commission to implement the task force's findings.

The award was presented at the bar's recent Old Timer's Night.

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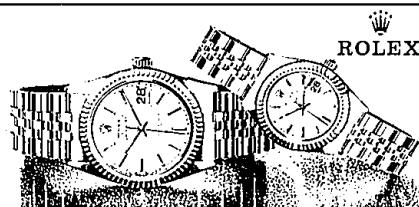
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