

State of State draws few great hopes

By Joanna Mallazewski
staff writer

Veteran state Rep. Wilbur (Sandy) Brotherton of Farmington thought Gov. James Blanchard expressed it well and sincerely.

But the seven-term Republican also thought the governor's annual State of the State message was only more of the same.

"I didn't find a great deal that was new in it," Brotherton said, adding that he liked what Blanchard said about the economy and education. "But I'm a little concerned about the follow through."

State Sen. Jack Faxon, D-Farmington Hills, said he would await details that seemed to have been missing from Blanchard's address to a joint session of the Michigan Legislature Wednesday.

Lack of details didn't bother Brotherton, who said that's how most State of the State messages are.

What did concern Brotherton, however, was Blanchard's lack of emphasis on increasing health care costs that inevitably pinch the state's budget because of Medicare.

BROTHERTON HAD the same feelings when Blanchard said the state will "make good" on its commitment that anyone who wants to go to college will be able to afford to go.

That's a pretty far-reaching statement, I frankly don't know what he means by that," Brotherton said.

Even with Blanchard's college tuition program — unveiled in the 1986 State of the State message — there are many financial questions still unanswered.

The effort that should take priority is forcing colleges and universities to operate more efficiently. Both health care and higher education costs have grown three and four times the rate of inflation, Brotherton said.

"There are reasons for that, but no excuse," he added.

Both Brotherton and Faxon were warm on the idea of a pre-school program for disadvantaged children.

"I favor pre-school programs. There's lots of evidence it's helpful. But the only way it works is if there's a followup. That's why the federal programs, which didn't have a followup, failed."

BROTHERTON CALLED the proposal "a worthwhile objective." But he again expressed concern for how such a program would be financed. "We would need extra dollars. And no one (other programs, departments) want to give any up."

"I'm willing to buy American. But I would like to feel that my business is appreciated."

— Sandy Brotherton
state representative

Brotherton suggested that a pre-school program should begin as a pilot program to determine whether it would be advantageous and how it could be financed.

Faxon's comments on Blanchard's other education-related proposals included disagreement on developing tests to measure whether students have employable skills.

"I don't think we need more tests. If they're talking about employable skills, the most important factor is attitude. A test isn't necessary to determine attitude. If they're eager to learn, you can train them. Do they want to learn? Do they accept the fact that someone knows more (about the job) than they do?"

Both Faxon and Brotherton were

confused about Blanchard's proposal for a cabinet-council on human investment.

"I don't understand that," Faxon said.

Brotherton offered similar comments: "I haven't the foggiest idea."

But he added that no one will know what the proposal is for until Blanchard appoints members to the panel.

"He is terrible when it comes to appointing people to these boards and commissions."

ON THE economy, Brotherton said he felt "the biggest problem frankly is that the economy did not continue to expand."

Though Brotherton said Blanchard's

hard's "estimates of the economy are probably too optimistic," the state continues to finish the fiscal year with a surplus. "So things are OK."

The problem, however, is that as the state budget continues to increase on the heels of the surplus, there's going to be a problem when the economy takes a dip. "We're going to be in trouble."

About concern over the auto industry, its layoffs and plant closings, Brotherton said he considers such problems "partly cyclical. I've always suspected that the Blanchard administration knew two years ago this was going to happen. The question was when it (would) happen."

Believing General Motors knew before the election that it would close plants and lay off workers, Brotherton said that "led people into a false sense of security."

The closing of older plants is bound to happen as General Motors opens newer ones around the country. But Brotherton also believes that the auto giant was "overly optimistic" about its sales.

BLANCHARD TOLD legislators that the plant closings are "the painful outcome of the lack of a strong, fair trade policy in Washington."

Brotherton agrees that trade "has something to do with it."

But Brotherton took his comments a step further. As a consumer, he said, he doesn't want to pay more money for an American product if he can pay less for an equal or better product.

"I'm willing to buy American. But I would like to feel that my business is appreciated," he said.

And to Blanchard's optimism in reducing Aid to Dependent Children welfare rolls, Brotherton called it "the same old trick that's been pulled around here as long as I've been here."

Attempts and promises are always made to reduce welfare rolls, but when they are not reduced, more money is sought.

"We have always ended up underestimating the budget. Particularly in light of auto layoffs, Blanchard's statement is incredible," Brotherton said.

Birthday sparks contests

Farmington-area students will have a chance to express their creativity through a series of contests sponsored by the Michigan Board of Education's Sesquicentennial Advisory Committee.

The theme of the contest, sponsored in cooperation with the Michigan Parent-Teacher Association's Reflection's Program, is "We are Michigan In Celebration: A Past to Remember, A Future to Mold."

Contest categories include:

- visual arts, which includes

painting, drawings, collages and printmaking.

- literature, which includes prose, poetry, drama.

- photography, including black and white prints up to 8 X 10.

PTA-Reflections contest winners will be selected in five grade-level groupings: from kindergarten through grade three, grades four through six, grades seven through nine, grades 10 through 12 and college and adult education.

State board Sesquicentennial awards will be available to all en-

trants, but only students enrolled in schools with a local PTA unit will be eligible for PTA reflections awards. Entries will be judged on evidence of creative ability and expression of theme.

Students interested in participating should contact their local PTA or Sesquicentennial coordinator for an official entry form. Deadline is Mar. 3 and entries should be mailed to: Barbara Adams, c/o Personnel Department, Royal Oak Board of Education, 1123 Lexington Blvd., Royal Oak, MI 48073.

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