

House panel restores aid to large cities

AP — Legislators have reached a compromise on the distribution of state revenue sharing money to local governments, but the Senate Appropriations Committee chairman says he won't go along.

The House Appropriations Committee voted 14-9 last week to amend Sen. Harry Gast's bill to reimburse Detroit and Michigan's larger cities for up to \$2.5 million they would lose when the revenue sharing formula is shifted in favor of the townships.

But Gast, R-St. Joseph, said the move negates the intent of his bill, and he will ask House members to strike the provision on the House floor.

THE ISSUE of how the state distributes its projected \$688 million in revenue sharing money for the fiscal year beginning Oct. 1 is complex, but it boils down to a battle between large cities and townships.

Rather than penalize either group, the House panel sought to ensure that neither cities nor townships receive less than they do now.

The amendment, offered by Rep. Morris Hood, D-Detroit, would mean Detroit would lose an estimated \$1.4 million in revenue sharing money. The cities of Grand Rapids, Pontiac and Flint each would have lost more than \$50,000 without the provision.

Gast's original bill would change the Treasury Department's method of calculating local property tax credits that determine revenue sharing levels.

The bill would prevent Shelby and Clinton townships in Macomb County and Canton Township in Wayne County from losing more than \$500,000 in revenue sharing.

WITHOUT THE amendment, the bill would have taken more than \$2 million away from cities and given it to townships.

But House Democrats, led by Rep. David Hollister, D-Lansing, and Hood, said Gast's proposed formula was unfair because it would have rewarded the townships for erroneously collecting more revenue under a bookkeeping error that wasn't discovered until 1985.

That's when the Treasury Department first noticed it had been counting as local revenues the specially voted taxes townships levy for such things as police and fire protection, said deputy treasurer Jay Rising.

By law, only permanent property taxes are supposed to be counted.

The Treasury Department has closed the loophole in the last few years, but Gast and others say the townships are now being punished.

THE COMPROMISE approved by

the committee guarantees that townships are given credit for all locally generated taxes, while reimbursing more than 50 cities that would lose funds because of the shift.

A supplemental appropriation of up to \$2.5 million also will have to be passed to finance the extra spending.

"The (cities) shouldn't be the ones to foot the bill," said Bill Davis, executive director of the Michigan Municipal League.

State treasurer Robert Bowman said he supported the compromise, even though he had hoped a permanent solution could have been worked out.

"I don't think this is the ideal way to solve it, but very little in government is ideal," Bowman told the panel.

Hollister chided Gast for attempting to take money from the cities.

"(Gast) wants to change the formula forever," Hollister said. "He's not going to get that out of here."

Anti-drug rally set at Silverdome

A four-hour rally against drugs and alcohol may draw as many as 32,000 students in grades six-12 to the Pontiac Silverdome Saturday, April 4, the Michigan PTA hopes.

"As an organization of parents, teachers and others interested in the young people of Michigan, we are expressing the depth of our concern about drug and alcohol problems in this society," said Fran Anderson, state PTA president.

The 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. program will be a blend of speakers, bands, performers and sports celebrities.

State Sen. Rudy Nichols, R-Waterford, sponsored a Senate resolution commemorating April 4 as "Student Champions for No Drug Use Day."

Anderson said the pilot project could be the largest anti-drug and anti-alcohol program ever put on and will be the first of its kind in the nation.

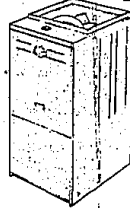
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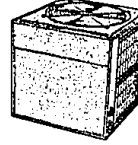
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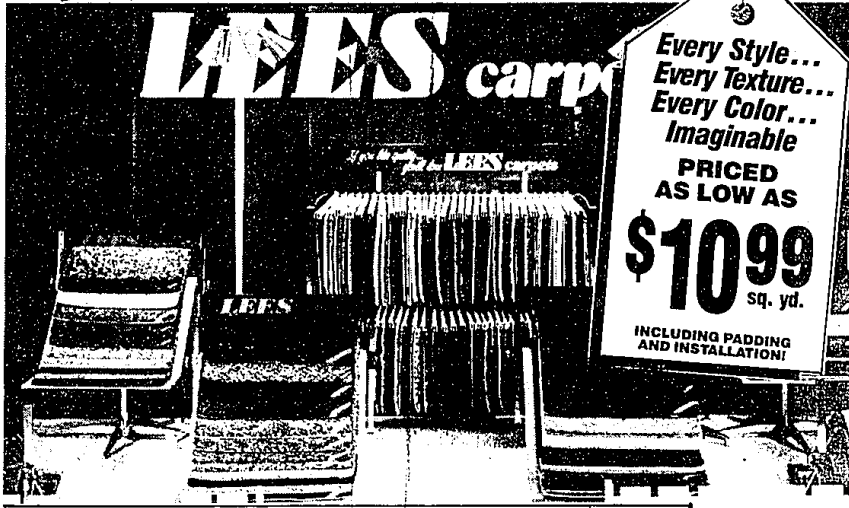
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