

Cruce prods Senate toward school funding

AP — If Lansing were Madrid, cheering crowds would be applauding wildly, caught up in the conflict, enjoying the spectacle as the adversaries dodge, spin and charge. *Of the fight in the Michigan Capitol*

is far less colorful but just as serious. No costumed matadors, flamboyant spectators or amphitheater; instead, in an ornate, high-ceilinged chamber designed for

the Supreme Court and now the arena for the Senate Appropriations Committee.

Here, under the watchful eyes of lobbyists and bureaucrats, lawmakers are shaping the next budget, deciding the direction state government will take in 1988. Battling a bull might be simpler.

BUDGET FIGHTS are different from the usual legislative scuffles, which can be explained by outlining the Democratic and Republican positions. Partisanship plays a part in the budget process, but so does philosophy and geography.

State Sen. Doug Cruce, R-Troy, a newcomer to the Appropriations Committee, is forcing his colleagues to do some hard thinking on both subjects.

He's urging senators to sacrifice

millions of dollars for their home districts in order to free up money for a statewide concern: education.

From a position as chairman of an appropriations subcommittee, Cruce has driven to cut more than \$35 million out of Gov. James Blanchard's spending requests for the Department of Labor, Commerce and Licensing and Regulation.

THE SENDING bill ready for debate was the Senate returns from its two-week Easter break:

• Deny Blanchard's request for a \$3.7 billion boost for Yes! Michigan promotion.

• Cut half Blanchard's request for 2 million to aid Chrysler Corp.'s Jerson Oak Technological Center project.

• And makes more cuts than Blanchard demanded in the so-called

"equity program" for cultural facilities, historical projects and libraries.

Blanchard suggested trimming the equity program account from this year's \$40 million to \$40 million in the 1987-88 budget year. The current version, which is likely to be changed over the next five months, calls for a \$37.7 million equity program.

It's tough for lawmakers who fought for money for local projects and campaigned on their success in bringing dollars back from Lansing to tell constituents they voted to take some of that money away.

But that's just one facet of this fight.

EVEN IF lawmakers agree cuts are justified, there's the matter of deciding where the dollars should go. Before the House and Senate get down to arguing over differing priorities, lawmakers in the two chambers have to agree among themselves.

Cruce, looking ahead to the next generation and warnings that children must be prepared for high-tech jobs, favors education.

Blanchard: 65 yes; Fuzzbusters, no

Gov. James Blanchard came out in favor of boosting Michigan's speed limit to 55 mph on rural interstates, as long as the state also makes it illegal to own radar detectors.

Blanchard told a news conference in Royal Oak that he favors legislation boosting the speed limit on about 720 miles of rural interstate highway in Michigan, but his support has strings attached.

"I'm inclined to support raising it to 65 with other conditions," Blanchard said. "I think we need several provisions on the bill including the ban on Fuzzbusters."

"The only purpose of a Fuzzbuster is to break the law," he said.

THE STATE Senate has approved the higher speed limit and attached to the bill a provision making it illegal to own or sell radar detectors. A hearing on the bill has been scheduled for April 29 by the House Transportation Committee.

The measure would maintain the 55 mph speed limit for trucks weighing more than 10,000 pounds. The speed limit for urban areas, including interstate highways, also would remain at 55 mph.

In an earlier news conference in Lansing, Blanchard said he supports maintaining the speed limit for big trucks.

"I think we probably need some additional power also in case there is an energy emergency to immediately move the limit back to 55," Blanchard said. "Tougher enforcement of the seat belt laws will be important."

THE LEGISLATURE'S most outspoken opponent of the proposed radar detector ban is Sen. Richard Fessler, R-West Bloomfield.

Alde Rick Simonson said he was not surprised by Blanchard's position because of the stands taken by Hough and Secretary of State Richard Austin.

"We remain convinced that it will be defeated in the House or found unconstitutional in the courts," Simonson said.

State Police director Gerald Hough opposes a higher speed limit but says if approved it should be accompanied by a ban on radar detectors, points assessed against drivers' records for all speeding violations, money to put more officers on speed enforcement patrols, and the power to pull over and ticket drivers who violate the state seat belt law.

Secretary of State Richard Austin has taken a similar stand.

The Associated Press contributed to this story.

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