

Workers comp deadline beaten by hours

Starting at a midnight deadline, Michigan's two-party, two-house Legislature finally agreed Thursday on a revised workers compensation law.

A House-Senate conference committee wrapped up a compromise, and both houses passed it.

The Senate vote was 35-1 with two absent. All Observer & Eccentric area senators voted yes.

The House vote was 95-0 with 15 absent. All area representatives voted for it except three who had excused absences: James Kosteva, D-Canton, Gerald Law, R-Plymouth, and Wilfred Webb, D-Hazel Park.

THE SENATE set up the conference committee showdown Tuesday by rejecting a House-passed bill in-

lated by Blanchard. The House then refused to agree to Senate changes.

If new legislation hadn't been in place Friday, Michigan law would have been unclear on which injured workers qualify for benefits.

House Speaker Gary Owen, D-Ypsilanti, said "egos" had prevented the Senate from approving a bill most of the business community supports.

Guy Gordon, spokesman for Senate Republicans, said cited "major areas of disagreement."

1. "We had long sought a nationally recognized definition of disability," a goal of business, which considered Michigan's definition too loose. The new, broader definition says a worker isn't considered disabled if he could perform some other job

"suitable to his or her qualifications and training."

2. "In response to a 1985 Michigan Supreme Court ruling, we wanted to clarify legislative intent on coordination of benefits," he said. In 1982 the Legislature decided workers injured before 1982 would not have their benefits "coordinated" — that is, reduced when other benefits such as pensions are collected.

Some employers cut benefits for workers receiving payments, although lawmakers insisted they intended the practice to affect only newly injured workers. The high court ruled that benefits could be coordinated. The Legislature wrote language into the specifically reversing the high court ruling.

3. "We sought to make workers comp the exclusive remedy to elimi-

nate 'double dipping' — where you could collect workers comp, Social Security, and then you find a sympathetic jury and get something there, too."

GORDON SAID Senate Republicans were greatly irritated at House Democrats and Blanchard for waiting so long to act on the issue.

"We introduced the bill seven weeks ago and sent it to the House,"

Gordon said. "The House kicked it out a week ago. The governor held a news conference and said, 'Here's a compromise and it's non-negotiable.' We were unjustly accused of holding up this thing. The governor never had one conversation with legislative leaders."

The Associated Press contributed to this story.

Prisoners are unpredictable

AP — Michigan prisons test inmates to predict dangerous behavior. But psychiatrists who have spent years trying to predict violence say no reliable method has been developed.

Accurate predictions could help determine if a prisoner should be released and indicate how to guard them while they are incarcerated.

But the March rape and murder of a woman guard at the State Prison of Southern Michigan in Jackson and the death there last weekend of a convict during a struggle with guards point to difficulties corrections officials have in anticipating violence.

PSYCHIATRISTS remain far from being able to predict when a person will commit a violent crime, doctor say, adding efforts will continue.

"It's a mission that is very difficult," said Dr. Kenneth Tardiff, a researcher in violent behavior at Cornell Medical College in New York.

Research shows there is strong likelihood that prediction of violence will be determined by analyzing brain chemistry, doctors say.

Since 1978, Michigan's male prisoners have been analyzed to predict their future behavior after parole.

For predicting assaults, the test looks at an inmate's record of robbery, rape, and murder, along with his prison conduct and whether he committed his first crime before age 15.

RESULTS HELP in deciding whether to parole a prisoner, said Robert Mills, a Department of Cor-

rections official.

For the last four years, corrections officials also have used another

test on incoming inmates to determine what security-level facility is proper for each prisoner.

Chunovich heads MEA

Larry Chunovich, a Southfield mathematics teacher, and Mary Christian, a Flint elementary teacher, will serve a third consecutive two-year term as president and vice-president of the Michigan Education Association, the state's largest school union.

MEA has more than 103,000 members among teachers and school support personnel.

Chunovich and Christian were unopposed in their bid for re-election during the MEA's Spring Representative Assembly, May 8-9 at the Detroit Renaissance Center's Westin

Hotel. Their term of office runs until August 1989. They are full-time MEA officers on leave of absence from their teaching positions.

Also elected were Julius Maddox, Pontiac, for a two-year term as secretary treasurer, and Edith Swanson, Willow Run, as an NEA Board of Directors member.

More than 875 Michigan school employees attended the annual spring session to decide issues. MEA's position paper on employee evaluations said the union recognizes management responsibility, but insists that school employees participate in determining the process.

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