

# City losing fight to tax institute

By Tim Richard  
staff writer

The state underwrote it. The city of Ann Arbor wants to tax it. But the Michigan Legislature intends to say "no."

It is the Industrial Technology Institute (ITI), a non-profit enterprise bankrolled by the state's Strategic Fund.

"It's a local control issue," said Sen. Lana Pollack, D-Ann Arbor, who wants her home town to be able to levy property taxes on ITI.

"It's a question of whether the state should be able to establish non-profit scientific institutes anywhere and remove property from the local tax rolls."

"Out-of-formula school districts (those getting no state aid) need this revenue," said Pollack.

POLLACK FAILED, however, to block a Senate bill that would clearly exempt non-profit, incorporated scientific institutes from local property taxation.

The bill, sponsored by Sen. Dick Posthumus, R-Lowell, last week was advanced to third reading on the Senate calendar after senators in a vote almost unanimously rejected Pollack's arguments.

The problem arose when a 1982 state law established research centers to create "centers of excellence" — non-profit research and de-

velopment enterprises. Three were created, including one in Ann Arbor. They work on new substances, processes and products that could have commercial value — and create jobs.

"They are of benefit to 'rust belt' industries. They help make Michigan import-competitive," said Sen. Chris Dingell, D-Southgate, in defending ITI's role.

THE ENABLING act failed, however, to specify that a "scientific institution" was exempt from property taxes.

The city of Ann Arbor sought to assess it, carried the battle to the

State Tax Tribunal and won a favorable ruling. ITI's property will be taxed — unless the Legislature passes Posthumus' corrective bill.

Ann Arbor officials argue that 53 percent of the property in the university town is exempt from property taxes. While these institutions mean jobs, they also attract families, with kids who use local public schools and playgrounds.

"If the state wishes to place a tax-exempt institution in certain areas, for whatever worthy causes, it should be willing to pay for the resulting shrinkage of the property tax rolls" — so Ann Arbor argues.

"ON THE SURFACE that's appealing," replied Sen. William Sederburg, R-East Lansing.

"But this institute was built on state land that was never on the tax rolls."

"It was built with state dollars. It provides a state benefit."

"And it was built in response to the state governor's proposal."

"The state is undertaking a lot of initiatives," Sederburg said in a rare Republican tribute to Gov. James Blanchard's economic program. "We should sustain them."

## Child witness bills readied

House and Senate conferees reached agreement on four bills designed to protect Michigan children testifying against abusive adults.

The House bills, sponsored by Rep. Mary Brown, D-Kalamazoo, had set the age for protective treatment at 17 and under.

The Senate Judiciary Committee, chaired by Rudy Nichols, R-Water-

ford, had split between 13 and 15.

A CONFERENCE committee headed by Brown and Nichols agreed to set the age at 15 and reported the bills back to the Legislature for final passage.

"I said I would consider 17 if data were produced later to support it," Nichols said last week.

Four bills are necessary, Nichols said, in order to cover proceedings in criminal courts, juvenile courts, teacher tenure and administrative cases.

The bills, if enacted and signed by the governor, would allow use of anatomically correct dolls, allow the presence of a "support person" such as a protective caseworker when the child is testifying and in some instances permit the use of videotapes.

USE OF videotapes would make it unnecessary for children to repeat their horror stories of sexual abuse seven or eight times — to a principal, police officer, detective, caseworker, prosecutor, district court and circuit court juries.

Experts told the legislative panels that the repetition makes children feel guilty, causing some to turn to psychological jello by the time the case reached open court.

## Grayson is promoted

Lisa Grayson, a native of West Bloomfield, has been promoted to deputy press secretary by Gov. James J. Blanchard.

She has been an assistant press secretary for two years and was campaign press secretary for Blanchard's 1986 reelection campaign.

The 25-year-old Michigan State University graduate will coordinate such special events as the 1987 Na-

tional Governors Association meeting in Traverse City in July. She also will fill in for press secretary Tom Sott as needed.

Grayson worked as an account assistant for PR Associates in Detroit before joining the governor's staff. She also served as a public relations intern for the U.S. Olympic Committee in Colorado Springs.

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