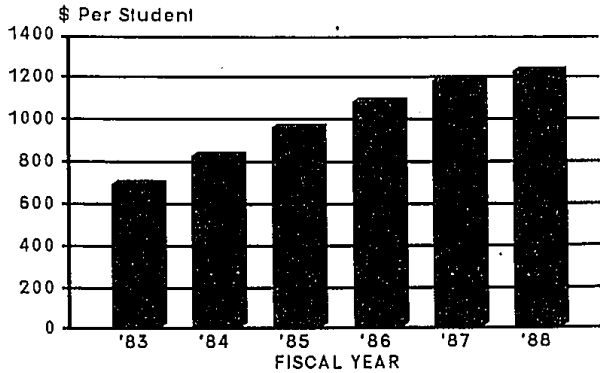


K-12 School Aid

Per Student Aid Up 79% in Five Years



State Department of Management and Budget

Per-pupil state spending is up in Gov. Blanchard's 1989 budget, but that's because there will be fewer pupils. Blanchard actually proposes \$568.8 million in state school aid, down 16 percent from this year's \$676.5 million.

School quality bills derailed in Senate

By Tim Richard
staff writer

Minority Democrats, aided by a handful of conservative Republicans, derailed three educational quality bills that were supposed to run through the state Senate Tuesday.

"It's not our intent to scuttle them," said Sen. Jack Faxon, D-Farmington Hills, "but there is no agreement on where to get the money."

And conservative Republicans such as Edgar Fredricks of Holland feared "a move to centralize authority" in the state Department of Education, calling the package "educational protectionism" for public schools.

Sen. Rudy Nichols, R-Waterford, branded both arguments "transparent and spurious."

TWO KEY VOTES dealt surprise defeats to Senate Majority Leader John Engler, R-Mount Pleasant, who had made school quality "the issue" of 1988.

First, the coalition in a voice vote refused to take up SB 549 requiring local school boards to make annual educational reports (see related story).

Second, it rejected, 13 in favor and 18 against, SB 548 on annual improvement plans. After that, senators never got around to SB 547.

"This was the first recommendation of the Harden Commission," said Engler. "The governor recommended it in his State of the State message. But now he's lobbying to vote on it to cover up the lack of program his party has in the House."

Gov. James J. Blanchard, a Democrat, had picked up many Republican ideas in his message. But as a condition, he insisted the Legislature must pass his four-year-old, \$250 million "tax equity" program — higher taxes on banks and insurers, an income tax on military pay and a tax on large lottery winnings. Republicans oppose it as a business tax increase plan.

REPUBLICANS have tied the school quality bills to a plan to guarantee \$2,750 in school funding for every pupil.

Faxon called the GOP plan unfair because metropolitan Detroit school district costs are 22 percent higher than the rest of the state's.

Engler also criticized Democratic Sen. Chris Dingell of Trenton who voted for the school quality bills in the Senate Education Committee and against them on the floor.

ON THE ROLL call vote to reject SB 548, Observer & Eccentric senators voted:

- Yes — Republicans Doug Grace of Troy and Rudy Nichols of Waterford.

- No — Democrats Jack Faxon of Farmington Hills and George Hart of Dearborn; Republicans Richard Fessler of Commerce and Robert Geake of Northville.

- Not voting — Democrat William Faust of Westland.

SOME REPUBLICANS, led by Fred Dillingham of Fowlerville, wanted to tie the school quality bills with a Senate bill reducing regulations on church-related schools.

That measure, SB 116, is bottled up in the House Education Committee where chairman William Keith, D-Garden City, won't take it up. Keith's office has been deluged with non-stop telephone calls from church forces.

On the Dillingham amendments, arena senators voted:

- Yes — Republicans Fessler and Geake, with Grace voting yes on one and an excused absence on the other.

- No — Democrats Faust, Faxon and Hart, and Republican Nichols.

The 3 school quality bills

Here are legislative staff analyses of three educational quality bills debated by the Michigan Senate:

- SB 547 requires local boards to make a "core" curriculum consisting of required and elective courses available to all pupils attending a public school. The "core" would include: career education, communication skills, computer science, foreign language, health and physical education, math, science, social studies, visual and performing arts, vocational education.

An amendment exempts non-public schools. The state school aid act provides incentive funds.

- SB 548 requires local boards to develop and implement three- to five-year school improvement plans for each school in the district. Plans would be based on state Board of Education models. An amendment requires "proposed methods of maintaining classroom management."

- SB 549 requires local districts to prepare and make public an annual educational report, covering accreditation status of every school, core curriculum activities, student achievement, dropout and retention rates.

Fessler, Faust ask more truck safety

Two suburban state senators are forming a bipartisan front to reduce what they call the alarming rate of increase in truck accidents on Michigan roads.

Sen. Richard Fessler, R-West Bloomfield, is prime sponsor and Sen. William Faust, D-Westland, a co-sponsor of a bill to establish a truck driver safety fund.

It's part of a package of bills aimed at improving truck safety unveiled last week in Lansing. Other sponsors are Reps. Curtis Hertel, D-Detroit, and Ed Gleese, R-Manistee.

"A major solution to reducing the number of truck accidents is to better educate our truck drivers," said Fessler, chairman of the Senate Transportation Committee. "It's imperative that we ensure the safety of motorists who are coming to fear big trucks."

Funds for the truck driver safety bill would come from a \$5 charge on motor carrier licenses, part of a nine-bill transportation package passed late in 1987.

Other bills in the new package would:

- Require tarpaulins on trucks carrying loose loads.
- Allow stiffer fines for violators of trucking regulations.

- Bring Michigan in line with federal standards by allowing only a single driver's license per truck driver. This is aimed at preventing drivers from "diluting" their offenses across several licenses.

Senators rip open Blanchard's budget

By Tim Richard
staff writer

They're suspicious — in both parties.

Members of the state Senate Appropriations Committee last week fired at the wrappings on Gov. James J. Blanchard's fiscal 1989 budget. One foresaw a big tuition increase for Oakland University students because state aid is short.

"I'll be glad to work with you," Shelby Solomon said seven or eight times in his first meeting with the Senate panel.

Solomon, who has been with the governor since Blanchard's congressional days, is the new state budget director, succeeding Robert Naftaly.

BIGGEST SENATORIAL complaint was supplemental.

Blanchard's practice of submitting a tight-looking budget and then asking additional, or supplemental, money later in the year.

Sen. R. Robert Geake, R-Northville, blistered low college funding in a subcommittee meeting, predicting higher tuitions at Oakland and Michigan State universities.

"On the face of it, the governor calls for a 1 percent increase in higher education funding," said Geake.

"What he doesn't say is that the 1 percent increase represents the restoration of the 0.75 percent cut made in this year's budget, which would represent only a 0.25 percent increase."

"But that's not the worst. The entire 1 percent 'increase' is earmarked for the new tuition assistance program for needy students. The result is that universities will receive less discretionary money than last year."

Geake quoted OU officials as warning students of a double-digit tuition increase in spring after last June's 7.3 percent hike.

AMONG OTHER bipartisan complaints:

- Chairman Harry Gast, R-St. Joseph: "Some legislative priorities are at risk in the governor's proposed \$800 million bond issue (for environmental cleanup) — particularly if the voters don't approve it."

Solomon replied that the budget has Superfund matching money and funds for toxic cleanups.

- Dan DeGrow, R-Port Huron: "You anticipated 8,000 less students (last year). But you had to put \$38 million in your mid-year (supplemental) because student count went up."

- Joe Conroy, D-Flint: Blanchard has proposed a pre-school program for "at risk" 4-year-olds, "but I struck on an elementary school having kindergarten go all day long. It was terrific for those without an educational start at home. Instead of 4-year-olds, think about an accelerated program for 5-year-olds."

- David Holmes, D-Detroit: "Do you expect more supplementals?"

Solomon: "Yes — in social services, especially the medicare area."

- Geake: "In social services, there's no increase in the program for foster care and runaway shelter. We're going to pay 3.5 percent more to social workers. How do we eat the increase?"

Solomon: "By reducing significantly the number of employees in social services. We're forcing the department to work more efficiently."

Despite the assurances, Geake still fears a reduction in services.

- Nick Smith, R-Hillsdale: "You kept your pension count low. You're \$25 million short. The average increase is 280 prisoners a month."

Solomon: "I disagree with the notion. We've taken our best estimate."

Chairman Gast: "It leaves us wondering if we're opening up to a new supplemental down the road."

- Connie Binsfeld, R-Maple City: "You're raising the fees for state water inspectors. We've tried to encourage people to get their (well) water inspected. That is raising a barrier."

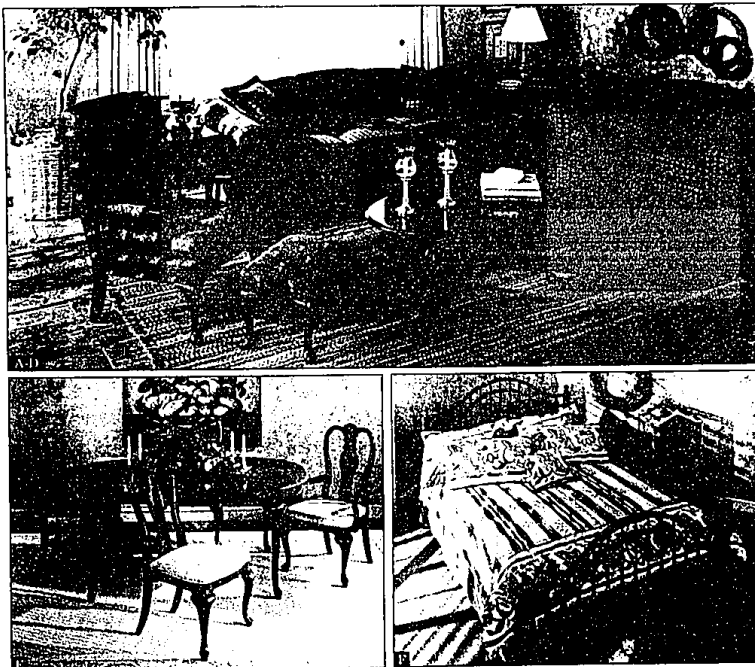
Solomon: The growth rate of programs isn't "in sync" with the level of revenue. "I made . . . very, very tough choices."

- Gast: Workfare, the civilian conservation corps and other job programs are reduced. But new programs are requested. "It seems it isn't any good unless it's a new program."

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