

# 'School quality' bills sail through Senate

By Tim Richard  
staff writer

A divided state Senate approved three "educational quality" bills Tuesday and sent them to the state House.

The bills mandate a core curriculum, require school districts to make five-year plans to correct deficiencies and mandate annual progress reports to the public.

"They are an affront to local school districts that are doing a good job," said Sen. Doug Cruce, R-Troy, who opposed all three.

"I felt they were an unnecessary intrusion on local control," agreed Sen. R. Robert Geake, R-Northville, who opposed two of the three.

But Sen. Jack Faxon, D-Farming-

ton Hills, supported all three, saying "education is a responsibility of the state. The school districts are creatures of the state."

"Quality" is a buzzword in Lansing this year. Legislative Republicans unveiled their proposals in 1987 and Gov. James J. Blanchard picked up the word in his State of the State address.

The bills apply only to public schools.

The central bill — SB 547 — would mandate a core curriculum. It would mandate "career education, communication skills, computer science, foreign language, health and physical education, math, science, social studies, visual and performing arts, and vocational education."

The bill would take effect only if voters this year amend the state

Constitution to halve school operating property taxes and raise the sales tax to 6 percent from 4 percent.

The vote was 25-11 with two absent.

Supporters included Democrats Faxon, William Faust of Westland and George Hart of Dearborn, plus Republican Rudy Nichols of Waterford.

Opposed were Republicans Cruce, Geake and Richard Fessler of Commerce Township.

THE OTHER bills are:

• SB 548 — Requiring local boards to develop and implement three-to-five-year school improvement plans in each school district. Plans would be based on state board of education models.

The vote was 24-12. Supporters included Faust, Faxon, Geake, Hart and Nichols. Opposed were Cruce and Fessler.

• SB 549 — Requiring local boards to make public an annual educational report covering accreditation status of every school in the district, core curriculum activities, student achievement, dropouts and retention rates.

It passed 26-10. Supporters included Faust, Faxon, Fessler, Hart and Nichols. Opposed were Cruce and Geake.

CRUCE TRIED twice to make the bills more palatable by offering an amendment saying:

"Any district that has more than 80 percent of its students achieve the objective of the Michigan Education

Assessment program may be exempted from this section by a majority vote of the board."

It came within a vote of winning, with support from Faxon, Fessler and Geake.

"The effect," Cruce said, "would have been that if a school district is doing a good job, don't make them fill out more paperwork and send it to the state. Address just those districts that aren't meeting standards."

Geake said meeting with superintendents and board members in the Livonia and Clarenceville school districts gave him the impression two of the bills were an unnecessary

state intrusion into local affairs.

"The bills would have been more acceptable with the Cruce amendment," he said.

But Faxon, a delegate to the 1983 state constitutional convention, argued that education was clearly made a state responsibility.

"The overall thrust of the bills is to require higher minimum standards throughout the state and put in some performance standards," he said.

"I even have some of that language in my new school aid formula bill," said Faxon who unveiled it at a news conference Wednesday afternoon.

## Mortgage case figure released on bond

(AP) — Gary L. Mitchell, a former official of Diamond Mortgage Co. and A.J. Obie & Associates imprisoned for violating state securities law, will be freed on \$50,000 bond pending an appeal, the Michigan Court of Appeals ruled.

Mitchell was released from the reception center at the State Prison of Southern Michigan at Jackson, where he has been held since his Feb. 29 sentencing. Sentence was passed by Oakland Circuit Judge Norman Lippitt.

A bond motion has not been filed on behalf of Barton Greenberg, sentenced to the maximum of six years,

eight months to 10 years in prison for his role in what state Attorney General Frank Kelley called Michigan's largest mortgage scam.

GREENBERG's attorney, Richard Zipser, declined to comment on whether such a motion would be filed.

Greenberg and Mitchell were accused of defrauding 1,600 investors of about \$47 million. Investors were mainly from western Michigan. Borrowers were mainly from southeastern Michigan.

The appeals court granted a motion for immediate consideration

of Mitchell's appeal and one for bond pending the appeal.

Assistant Attorney General Robert Ianni said he argued against the release, but said, "It's generally standard procedure and not unusual here. They're generally let out when they are not perceived to be a physical threat."

MITCHELL, former president of Diamond and vice president and treasurer of Obie, pleaded no contest

to a count of securities fraud. Greenberg, former Diamond board chairman and Obie president, pleaded no contest to a count of obtaining money under false pretenses. The two firms were headquartered in Bloomfield Hills and Grand Rapids.

Mitchell owed no stock in either company, had little control over accounts and drew a \$100,000 annual salary, Kelley said. He said Mitchell knew of two fraud schemes but was not the primary instigator.

## Court photo rules may ease

(AP) — Restrictions on the experimental use of cameras and tape recorders in some Michigan courts may be eased soon, state Supreme Court Justice Dennis Archer says.

Archer acknowledged Thursday that current rules of the one-year pilot program that began Feb. 1 have continued excluding recording devices from most court proceedings. Cameras must be excluded at the request of either the defendant or victim in a criminal case or of either party in a civil case.

"I think the media have some justifiable concerns," Archer told a

Grand Rapids Rotary Club. "I think those concerns will be addressed."

A committee of 14 judges and attorneys appointed by the Supreme Court is reviewing the current rules' effectiveness. Archer said, adding, "I suspect the committee will be coming to us fairly soon with the recommended changes."

Archer said the high court also is seeking statewide financing for all courts to eliminate differences in rich and poor districts.

"All we can do is to work with the executive branch and the Legislature to encourage them to engage in statewide financing," he said.

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