

# County to add 2 judges

## But staff costs of \$1.3 million stir ruckus

By Tim Richard  
staff writer

A split Oakland County Board of Commissioners agreed to add two more circuit judges despite warnings it will cost \$1.3 million a year for 29 support staff.

"A lot of times we don't realize the ancillary costs of something. We're asking taxpayers to fund these forever," said Commissioner Marilyn E. Gosling, R-Bloomfield Hills. "I have big problems tying up that much money."

"The burden of proof is with the (14 current) circuit judges. Their case is woefully lacking," added James Doyon, D-Madison Heights, a lame duck commissioner who isn't seeking re-election.

"It's unrealistic to presume we don't need them," countered Commissioner David Moffitt, R-Bloomfield Township.

THE BOARD Thursday approved a resolution, 17-3, asking the Michigan Legislature to pass a bill creating the two judgeships.

A more crucial vote — to send the proposal to the personnel committee — was rejected on a closer vote, 5 yes and 17 against. The dissenters, besides Gosling and Doyon, were Anne Hobart, R-Waterford, Angus

McPherson, D-Berkley, and Robert Page, R-Birmingham.

A week earlier, however, the proposal was in doubt when it was rejected by the finance committee, which reviews all money matters. That panel later reversed itself.

But the bill also is tied up in Lansing politics. The Senate passed one version but tacked on a controversial amendment from Sen. Connie Binsfeld, R-Maple City, to ban surrogate parenting, in which a couple pay a woman to bear a baby by the husband through artificial insemination.

Rep. Perry Bullard, D-Ann Arbor, chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, is talking about adding his own amendment to prohibit investment of state pension money in corporations doing business in segregated South Africa.

THE OAKLAND flap is bigger than adding two judges, who would be elected in 1990.

First complication is that 29 more jobs would have to be added, assuming all judges get the same support staff. These include the judges' clerks, typists and research clerks; Friend of the Court staff such as attorneys and family counselors; assistant prosecutors to "cover" the court and their secretaries; sheriff's deputies as guards; and probation of-

ficers. In 1988 dollars, they would cost \$1.3 million a year beginning in 1991.

Second complication is that the county is designing a new and more secure courtroom wing, and new judges will mean higher capital costs.

Doyon noted that judges say, "Every judge is equal." It means "every judge has to have what the other judges have," he said, citing past demands for paneling and impressive furniture.

Doyon, supported by Gosling, made the motion to refer the resolution to the personnel committee to study what savings might be made.

For example, one court has substituted a videotape camera for a stenographer in recording its proceedings. Another example is that Oakland has done pioneer work in setting up "alternative dispute resolution" systems that use trained referees and less formal methods.

COMMISSIONER James E. Lanni, R-Royal Oak, had still another objection, although he finally supported the new judgeships.

"My concern is that the state is funding all the courts in Wayne County (but not the other 82)," Lanni said. "The state is making decisions for the county."

County Executive Daniel T. Murphy, asked whether he would veto the resolution. "You decide how many judges you want. I decide where they're gonna go. I'm not going to answer the (veto) question," Moffitt was the only commissioner who vocally supported the new judgeships.

"Our population is growing. The tide of litigation is growing nationally," he said, citing delays in cases coming to trial of four years in Wayne County and seven in Los Angeles County.

"Here it (delay) is considerably less. But there is a delay."

In reply to Doyon's charge that some judges weren't working and their cars weren't in the parking lot during court hours, Moffitt cited his experience. Before Circuit Judge Fred Mester, who had to listen to 90 motions by 90 pairs of attorneys in a single day. "It's a superhuman task," Moffitt said.

# OCC's libraries

## losers of decade

The libraries of Oakland Community College were the biggest losers during the recession of the early 1980s, Chancellor R. Stephen Nicholson says.

In "real" dollars, adjusted for inflation, OCC is spending less in fiscal 1987 than it did in fiscal 1976, Nicholson told trustees recently.

In the earlier year, OCC spent \$2,018 per student. Currently it is spending \$2,989. But after adjustment for inflation, that figure shrinks to \$1,866 — less than was spent a decade ago.

Nicholson put the cumulative loss of state aid over 10 years at \$33 million. The college's current budget is \$48 million, of which \$14 million comes from state aid.

Not only did the state fail to increase appropriations some years, but the governor had to issue executive orders cutting aid as revenues shriveled.

SABBATICAL leaves have been approved by the OCC board for one faculty member and two administrators.

Joan Leininger, on the communications arts faculty at the Orchard Ridge Campus, will have a leave in

the fall of 1988 at full pay. Leininger will conduct research nationally on developmental programs in oral communications and listening. OCC's developmental programs are aimed at bringing new students up to college-level performance.

Henry Freilgruber, an information and telecommunications specialist in the central office for 22 years, will take off the spring semester at full pay to complete work on a master's degree in administration at Central Michigan University.

Linda Casenhiser, a five-year employee in the central academic and student affairs office, will be off the spring semester at half-pay to complete her bachelor's degree work in business administration at Siena Heights College.

MAJOR GIFTS accepted by the OCC board were:

• \$600 to the men's basketball program at Highland Lakes from the OCC Foundation, a private fund-raising group.

• \$3,000 to the Harbinger Dance Company, a private group that teaches and performs under contract at the Orchard Ridge Campus — also from the OCC Foundation.

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