

Lawmakers left out of tax-cutting drive

By Dave Varga
Staff writer

Legislators had their shot at cutting state taxes. Now, a petition drive will be "forged in citizens' language," said former Oakland County prosecutor L. Brooks Patterson Tuesday.

Patterson, who is heading up the drive, promised to have final details of the plan ready within 45 days.

The bottom line: "There'll be a rollback and we'll lock that rollback into the Michigan Constitution, like the sales tax is," Patterson told a press conference Tuesday in Birmingham.

Key state lawmakers like Rudy Nichols and Mat Dunaskis who sponsored different tax cutting proposals were invited to an initial meeting. However, lawmakers will be omitted from the process of drawing up a final tax cutting plan, Patterson said.

"The Legislature has had ample

opportunity to deal with the issue and has not chosen to do so," Patterson said. "The Legislature always sets out to design a sleek race horse and always ends up with a humpy-back camel."

TAX-CUTTING ACTIVISTS who will be included in the committee drafting the language are Patterson; economist Patrick Anderson and Joel Wittenberg, both of Alexander Hamilton Life Insurance Company of America; Richard Headlee, chairman of Alexander Hamilton and leader of the successful 1978 tax limitation drive; Dominic Vincitini, co-chairman of the Oakland County Taxpayers Association; and Steve Young of the Michigan Chamber of Commerce.

They set four major goals — cutting property taxes without increasing other taxes, limiting future taxes, spending more money for K-12 education while keeping local con-



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trol and strengthening the Headlee Amendment.

The drafting committee discussed 17 different tax cutting or limiting proposals Tuesday for about 2½ hours. The entire group will meet Saturday.

THEY REACHED "near unanimi-

ty" on eliminating loopholes and strengthening the Headlee Amendment, Anderson said. That includes eliminating the possibility of another school board duplicating Troy's approval of \$32 million bonds to build a new school even after voters twice rejected the plan, which raises taxes. Members also strongly supported

a plan like Massachusetts' "Proposition 2½," which would limit property taxes to no more than 2.5 percent of cash value of property. That would, in effect, cut the allowable tax rate to 50 mills under the current assessment ratio. Statewide, the average taxpayer pays about 54 mills in taxes, Anderson said.

Other top ideas include:

- Cutting from the current 50 percent, down to perhaps 45 percent, the amount of property values that tax rates are multiplied against. That would reduce property taxes.

- Cutting the Michigan Constitution's limit on state revenue below the current limit of 9.9 percent of personal income.

- Mandating an increasing amount for the state to spend on local schools, a fund that can't be raided by the Legislature. The plan, Patterson said, is to "set a certain base amount education can count on."

- Setting a one-time, fixed-percentage cut in property taxes.

THOSE INVITED to the first meeting of the tax-cut group ranged from those looking to "bankrupt" government and others who wouldn't "kick" government at all, Patterson said.

"We want it strong enough to satisfy them, but reasonable enough for us to defend in the public arena," he said.

The group and "an army of volunteers" will hit the public arena this summer. They need 229,000 valid signatures within 180 days to get the tax cutting plan on the ballot by 1990, Patterson said. They are targeting 300,000 to 350,000 signatures to make up for invalid names, he said.

The drive will operate — for printing and travel expenses — on personal donations. Patterson said they expect to gather and spend \$150,000.

Employment law seminar at OU

With employment related lawsuits increasing in Michigan courts, a pertinent one-day seminar, Employment Law and the Legal Assistant, will be conducted from 8:30 a.m. to 4:15 p.m., Friday, April 28, by the Oakland University Division of Continuing Education at Meadow Brook Hall, Rochester.

Co-sponsored by the Legal Assistants Association of Michigan, the seminar will cover wrongful discharge, discrimination; sexual

harassment; alcohol and drug testing; AIDS and other contagious diseases; workers disability compensation; preparing for an employment case — plaintiff/employee; and preparing for an employment case — defense/employee.

Speakers will be Judge Fred Mester, circuit judge, Sixth Judicial Circuit Court of Michigan; Craig Lange, attorney, Barlow and Lange, P.C.; David Kress, assistant deputy director of the Bureau of

Worker's Disability Compensation; Michael Pitt, attorney, and Susan DeWinter, legal assistant, both of Kelman, Loria, Downing, Schneider and Simpson; William B. Balke, attorney, and Denise MacDougall, legal assistant, both of Dykema Gossett.

Tuition is \$95; registration deadline is April 21. Call 370-3120 between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. weekdays. The public is welcome to register.

'Quiet' progress on campuses

Continued from Page 5

presidents than any major university in the nation outside of "historically black universities." But it acknowledged WSU is short of black department chairs, despite "repeated efforts to change."

- A set-aside of \$150,000 a year for to make "attractive financial offers to black and Hispanic candidates for faculty positions."

- Some 46.8 percent of scholarship money going to blacks, who make up 27.3 percent of the undergraduate student body. In addition, WSU increases its budget for finan-

cial aid each time it increases tuition; it also seeks private gifts for scholarships.

Michigan State University president John DiBiaggio said administrators will meet personally with every student group that has expressed concern about racism on campus.

DiBiaggio said provost David Scott and human relations director Ralph Bonner will assure all students know how to file grievances through the anti-discrimination judicial procedures.

DiBiaggio said he would not, how-

ever, reprimand economics professor emeritus C. Patric (Lash) Larrow because the outspoken professor publicly apologized for saying that "you won't find too many black students in a class as tough as this (his labor law course)."

Larrow called his remark "profoundly stupid" and said he deserves a fine or reprimand, but added dismissal is excessive. Ironically, Larrow has a long civil rights record, dating to 1959 when he was faculty adviser for the newly formed chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People on the East Lansing campus.

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