

# Levin's House district faces change

By Wayne Peal  
staff writer

It is certain Michigan will be a big population loser once 1990 census figures are compiled.

But it's more than a question of numbers on a page. The 1990 census could bring profound changes in the state's Congressional delegation — including western Wayne County's three Congressional seats, one of which is held by Rep. Sander Levin, D-Southfield.

Most political observers expect Michigan to lose up to two of its 16 House of Representatives seats as a result of the next census.

"I think that's a pretty good prediction — two seats," said David Geis, a spokesman for Rep. William Ford, D-Taylor, whose district includes Garden City, Westland, Canton Township and southern Livonia.

Which seats will be lost is uncertain. Yet each of the area's three seats — the 2nd, 15th and 17th —

were projected as population losers in a nationwide survey compiled for Congressional Quarterly.

That means they are vulnerable, if not to elimination, then to boundary re-drawing. If either happens, area residents currently represented by Ford, Levin or Carl Pursell might find themselves annexed to someone else's district by the time the 1992 elections roll around.

"It's fair to expect every district will face some kind of change," said Pursell, R-Plymouth, whose district

includes city of Plymouth, Plymouth Township and northern Livonia.

**THE BIGGEST** population loser — and most vulnerable to change — appears to be the 17th District, which includes Southfield and Redford Township. The seat is held by Levin.

"He's very concerned about the census," Levin spokeswoman Cynthia Mann said. "The Congressman is meeting with the governor and the state Congressional delegation to assure we can come up with a way to make sure everyone is counted."

A survey of the nation's 435 House districts found Levin's the sixth biggest population loser, by percentage, for the years 1980-86. District population shrank by nearly 6 percent over that period, according to the survey.

"Obviously, that concerns us greatly," Mann said. Ford's district, the 15th and Pursell's, the 2nd, were not ranked among the top 10 population losers. They are, however, included in the list of Frost Belt seats expected to see population decreases.

That group includes almost all House seats in a straight line from western Pennsylvania and New York State to western Iowa.

"It's not surprising," Pursell said. "The Sun Belt is growing and that's where our party is concentrating its strategy."

(Ironically, Rep. William Broomfield's Oakland County district is seen as one of only three seats in the region expected to record a population increase.)

The burning question in all this is



U.S. Rep. Sander Levin

whether the GOP will pick up House seats as population dwindles in large cities and their older, industrialized suburbs — traditional Democratic strongholds.

THE ANSWER depends upon who's doing the drawing.

Congressional districts are drawn up by governors, state Houses and state Senates. "That's what happens if they agree," Geis said. "If they don't it winds up in (state supreme) court."

With the governorship and state House in Democratic control and with a 20-18 GOP edge in the state Senate, next year's state races take on even greater importance.

Even though they aren't required to follow geographic boundaries, boundary plans must be roughly equal in population. A 1983 U.S. Supreme Court decision ruled districts must be drawn to assure the smallest possible variance.

A 1982 amendment to the nation's Voting Rights Act is seen as protecting districts with heavy minority populations against widespread re-districting.

Through that amendment, aggrieved parties aren't required to prove there was an intent to dilute their particular voting bloc, they need only prove dilution will occur.

That fact could become an issue in Michigan re-districting. Rep. George Crockett's downtown Detroit district was listed as the nation's top population loser, with a 13.6 percent decline from 1980-86. The 1st District seat held by Detroit mayoral candidate John Conyers Jr. ranked fourth in terms of population loss with a 6.3 percent decline.

When state politicians actually sit down at the table to re-draw boundaries, however, those factors may matter less than the seniority of the House members whose districts they are carving.

"Generally, you don't find long-time House members losing their districts," said Pursell, a House member since 1977. "That generally happens to freshmen."

But given the heavy seniority of most Michigan House members, Pursell said, anything could happen.

"You might find some veteran members retiring and that could alter the picture," he said.

Ford has been a House member since 1965. Levin has served since 1983. Michigan's House delegation stood at an all time high of 19 after the 1970 census, but dropped to 18 after the 1980 census.

## Landing fees

### Panel postpones billing small planes

By Janice Brunson  
staff writer

Responding to opposition voiced by the operators of small aircraft, Wayne County commissioners tabled a recommendation calling for landing fees at Detroit Metropolitan Airport.

Members of the Committee on Roads, Airports and Public Services unanimously voted last week to postpone action until more information is available.

Commissioner Susan Heintz, a member of the committee whose district includes Livonia, opposed the recommendation. "I want the record to show I opposed landing fees."

Under a proposed schedule, aircraft operators would be charged fees of \$7 to \$169 for each landing at Metro, depending upon weight of the aircraft. Most of those expressing opposition at Thursday's meeting operate aircraft subject to fees of \$7.

"This is a thinly veiled attempt to eradicate general aviation from Metro," said Larry White of Canton, president of the Mang Aero Club whose members rely on Metro to gas their planes.

Bill Bottle of Farmington Hills, chairman of the Tenant Association of Metropolitan Airport, said landing fees were a way of forcing small aircraft owners into paying for airport expansion.

"LIGHT AIRCRAFT" doesn't need 10 to 12,000 foot runways or new terminals. The scheduled airlines need them. So let them pay for it," Bottle said.

White maintains small aircraft operators already "pay their fair share" by purchasing gasoline from a self-service pump at Metro. Four cents of each gallon sold goes to Wayne County.

In June, 5,642 gallons were sold and in July, another 4,355 gallons. Mang members purchase an estimated 1,000 gallons monthly, according to White, who said an additional 1 cent charge on each gallon of gasoline that is sold would generate enough additional income for the county.

The issue of landing fees first arose two years ago, according to Wayne County Commission clerk Al Montgomery, who told members of the roads and airport committee that scheduled airlines at Metro asked he investigate use fees paid by others.

"When we looked at general aviation, we found many small aircraft operators are not purchasing their fuel at Metro. They are not contributing their fair share," Montgomery said.

Under the current proposal, operators who do purchase gas at Metro would receive credit towards landing fees.

ITEM 29 of a Commission Action Plan for Metro Airport calls for relocating a portion of general aviation traffic. The report said the goal

is "achievable," something that should "start in the near term and continue."

Landing fees will certainly result in "relocation," according to White, citing the experience at Lambert International Airport in St. Louis. Landing fees of \$7.50 each were recently initiated. "There is (now) only one general aircraft located on this field, a Cessna 172 with one private owner."

Most airports of similar capacity to Detroit Metro, including Houston Intercontinental, Memphis International, Phoenix Sky Harbor and Pittsburgh International, charge no landing fees, White said. Chicago's Midway charges \$4.38 per landing and the Minneapolis-St. Paul airport charges \$5.

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