

By Tim Richard
staff writer

State Sen. David Honigman, R-West Bloomfield, is trying to head off a bill making assisted suicide a felony — a measure some consider "unduly harsh."

"Many legislators are uncomfortable with the uniform treatment" of making all assisted suicide a four-year felony, Honigman told a news conference minutes before Senate Bill 32 was reported out of committee.

Honigman and Rep. Tom Power. R-Traverse City, want to set up an 18-member "Commission on Death and Dying" to study data on voluntary suicides, causes, the role of alcohol and drugs, the roles of disease and disability, legal and moral questions.

"I can't see throwing an 80-year-

old woman in prison for four years," said Hunigman, "when her dying husband, in excruciating pain, begs her to hand him a bottle of pain killer that he says will end his life."

"Even the threat of prosecution is too harsh."

BUT THE BILL by Sen. Fred Dillingham, R-Fowterville, would punish her, Honigman added.

Dillingham's bill won 5-2 approval in the Family Law Committee. Supporters included Robert Geake, R-Northville, Jack Welborn, R-Kalamazoo, Doug Carl, R-Utica, and Chris

Opposed were Virgil Smith, D-Detroit, and Debbie Stabenow, D-Lansing.

Dillingham scoffed at delaying action for a lengthy study, calling Honigman's commission "a lot of hoopla."

"We solve nobody's problems by

not taking action. The judges were very, very specific that the issue needed to be decided quickly in the Legislature," Dillingham said. He referred to two Oakland County judges, one of whom dismissed a murder charge against Dr. Jack Kevorkian and another who slapped an injunction on Kevorkian's use of a heart-stopping suicide machine.

Dillingham said his bill is aimed at Kevorkian and those "who make a business of assisting suicide."

SB 32 would amend the penal code to make it a four-year felony for a person who "provides the means by which another person attempts or commits suicide (or) acts as a participant in a suicide or attempted sui-

Suicide itself is not a crime. Dillingham's bill is due on the Senate floor next week. If adopted, it would take effect in 1993.

STABENOW SAID she will support Honigman's measure.

"Four years for passing a bottle of pills?" she said, echoing Honigman's speech. "I know he (Dillingham) intends to go after Dr. Kevorkian, but the net is way too broad."

"Look at it as placing a moratorium on the issue until someone comes up with a solution," Dillingham replied.

Two other sections of the Dillingham bill were non-controversial. One would define as murder the act of forcing a person to commit suicide. The other would make it attempted murder to cause a person to attempt suicide.

HONIGMAN AND Power, both attorneys, introduced identical bills in their respective chambers.

Power's bill likely would go to the House Judiciary Committee chaired

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— Sen. David Montgomery
R West Bloomfield

by Rep. Perry Bullard, D-Ann Arb. There it's likely to get a warmer reception than Dillingham's bill, which is supported by Right to Life.

Honigman's bill could go to Warren's Family Law Committee.



where it might have trouble, or the Senate Judiciary Committee.

The pair have been on opposite sides of another "life" issue — abortion. Honigman voted for abortion restrictions. Power against.

Gov. John Engler said he is moving to end abuses of state legislative officeholder expense funds by proposing a set of voluntary restrictions.

Engler said his reforms would ensure greater accountability, more regular reporting and tougher enforcement provisions.

"Our ultimate goal is the elimination of OEFs," said Engler, praising Senate committee action to abolish OEFs.

"Until OEFs are abolished, however, they must be reformed," Engler said.

ENGLER PROPOSED to:

- Limit the types of expenditures which could be made by these funds to those acceptable under the federal Internal Revenue Code as "business or charitable deductions" — a more restrictive list than that currently afforded by the state administrative code.

- Mandate that OEFs be managed by a treasurer and chairwoman who are legally responsible for all receipts, expenditures and reporting on behalf of the fund.
- Mandate regular, periodic public reporting of all fund activity.
- Establish a mechanism for determination and enforcement of fund violation, by providing a system of meaningful penalties, including civil fines.



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