

Key Republican doesn't go along with Engler plan

By Tim Richard
staff writer

One key Republican senator wasn't aboard the Engler train as it launched a drive for a 30-percent school property tax cut.

"It's overly complex and confusing," said Sen. R. Robert Geake, R-Northville. "The Legislature might more easily reduce assessments to 45 percent or some figure less than 50 percent of true market value."

Gov. John Engler proposes to pay for his proposed property tax cut by using half the annual growth in state revenue to reimburse local school districts for property taxes they would lose if voters in 1992 approve Engler's plan.

"I'm not entirely confident there will be enough growth in state revenue to compensate school districts for lost revenue," said Geake, a fifth-term senator.

BUT SEN. MAT Dunaskiss of Lake Orion said he was "happy to be a co-chair" of the drive. "He invited the entire Senate Republican caucus to be co-chairs."

Engler's prescription is "just what the doctor ordered," Dunaskiss said in his Lansing office. "We keep our commitment for property tax relief. We guarantee money for education. And we put a 3-percent cap on future assessment increases — solid relief."

Dunaskiss, a former representative serving his first Senate term, said a rival House Democratic plan would raise business taxes to pay for homeowner-only tax relief — "definitely a job loss for Michigan." Sen. George Z. Hart, D-Deerborn, whose district stretches to Garden City, said through an aide he endorses the Democratic plan but "am not closing my mind on any plan," including Engler's.

Other area senators could not be reached for comment. Dave Honigman, R-West Bloomfield, is out of the country; Michael Bouchard, R-Birmingham, Jack Faxon, D-Farmington Hills, and William Faust, D-Westland, were out of town.

Even before Engler made his own mid-Tuesday announcement at the Michigan State Fair, Democratic state chairman Gary Corbin had issued a statement denouncing the governor's plan for "giving 36 percent of all tax cut dollars to business."

Corbin supports the Democrats' homeowners-only plan, to be paid for by raising the single business tax.

ENGLER TOLD a State Fair audience he dropped his plan for a 20-

percent cut in school operating property taxes over three years because "a 20-percent cut isn't enough."

He signed a petition drive to put on the ballot a constitutional amendment cutting school operating taxes 30 percent over five years.

The Republican governor's plan is likely, however, to mean a continuing series of cuts in other parts of state government. He would pay the \$500 million 1992 cost of school tax cuts by dedicating half the growth in state revenue for property tax relief.

But there are problems: "Historically," said Engler, "the state budget has risen by 4.5 to 5 percent each year." Dedicating half to property tax relief would leave state government 2.25 to 2.5 percent growth.

Consumer price inflation has risen 4.5 to 5 percent annually much of the last decade. And even if Federal Reserve Board Chairman Alan Greenspan succeeds in holding inflation to an annual 3.5 percent, state revenue growth would fail to keep pace, even if state employees accepted no pay increases.

State employees, many now represented by the United Auto Workers, are unlikely to accept zero pay increases. Moreover, state universities are knocking on Engler's door for 5.5 percent more a year.

ENGLER'S CHARTS showed that over time his new "cut and cap" plan would give more property tax relief than either the Headlee Taxpayers United plan or the House Democratic plan.

Engler said his plan provides \$499 million in relief the first year compared to \$1.5 billion in the TU plan and \$69 million in the Democratic plan.

But by 1997, Engler said his plan would provide nearly \$2.3 billion in relief versus \$2.9 from TU and a net \$109 million under the Democratic plan.

The governor's calculations showed the Democratic plan in 1997 giving \$1.4 billion in homeowner tax relief but costing nearly \$900 million more in business property taxes and \$547 million more in single business taxes.

DEMOCRATIC chief Corbin said his party's plan is better because it's "fully funded" while Engler's would "seriously underfund vital human services."

Richard Headlee, the Farmington Hills state executive who heads Taxpayer United, has lawyers in the Court of Appeals seeking to force the State Board of Canvassers to place the TU plan on the 1992 ballot.

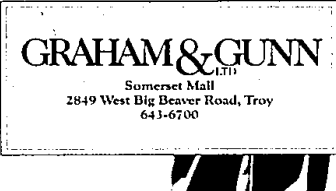
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Recycling programs on tap

Independence Oaks County Park is hoping to promote good solid waste management with the "Recycle Sing," a campfire program featuring songs and stories to promote recycling.

The program is from 7-8:30 p.m. on Saturday, Sept. 7. Cost is \$1 per person, with pre-registration required.

Participants are urged to bring a lawn chair or blanket, insect repellent and flashlight.

Classes for soon-to-be parents

The Oakland County Health Division will offer a series of six Expectant Parent Classes beginning on Thursday, Sept. 11, in the Oakland County Health Division, 27725 Greenfield Road, Southfield.

Classes will be 7-9 p.m. and will be taught by public health nurses. There is a \$10 charge for attending the series of classes, and you are asked to pre-register as enrollment

is limited. Topics will include maternal physical changes, good nutrition, growth and development of the fetus and the baby, labor and delivery, infant care and parenting.

The Health Division advises that you enroll as early in your pregnancy as possible.

To register by Sept. 6, please call 424-7090.

Volunteer for 'Jerry's kids'

Volunteers are needed to answer phones at the Pontiac-North Woodward Phone Center for the Jerry Lewis Telethon for Muscular Dystro-

phy on Labor Day Weekend. If you can work one of the six hour shifts, please call 476-2920.

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