

State aid axe

Senate bill targets well-off districts — again

By Tim Richard
staff writer

State senators have invented a new name for "recapture" — the practice of taking categorical aid from well-off school districts. Their new jargon is "equity correction."

Instead of taking \$60 million from well-off districts, "equity correction" will cost them \$107 million under the Senate state school aid bill for next fall.

"Terrible. Just terrible," said Sen. Jack Faxon, D-Farmington Hills, whose home district, like many in the Observer & Eccentric suburbs, has been a loser in state aid in recent years.

More than 50 out-of-formula districts, which get no general state aid, are suing the state for cutting off special purpose aid such as special education.

THE SCHOOL aid bill is the work of Sen. Dan DeGrow, R-Port Huron, and John J.H. Schwarz, R-Battle Creek. Both are determined to narrow the gap in resources between the poorest districts (\$2,500 per pu-

per) and the richest (\$9,000).

DeGrow, Schwarz and Faxon are the three members of the Senate Appropriations subcommittee on school aid. "It's been a hard bill," DeGrow said last week. He said the panel will report it out April 21. The full Appropriations Committee will take it up April 22.

DeGrow, whose rural Thumb district includes many of the state's poorest schools, argues there is no logic to any state payment to districts with large resources.

DeGrow and Schwarz were Senate leaders in passing the law to require wealthy districts to share half the growth in their business property taxes. Gov. John Engler wants to repeal the so-called tax-base sharing. DeGrow's aid bill keeps it.

MEANWHILE, DeGrow and Schwarz proposed expanding Michigan's 4-percent sales tax to out-of-state catalog orders and long-distance telephone calls.

It would raise \$136 million, with \$120 million going to education.

They would allocate \$84 million to schools, \$16 million to community

colleges, \$33 million to universities and \$12 million to general revenue sharing.

"I fully understand Gov. Engler's recommended funding freeze," Schwarz said. "But education simply needs more money."

DeGrow proposes holding down rising school costs by having the Office of the State Employer negotiate contracts instead of local districts. "Current contracts for public school employees are out of line with what's going on with most of the public and private sector," he said.

HERE IS what the school aid bill (Senate Bill 226) looks like so far:

- Total spending — \$3 billion, up 5 percent over the current \$2.87 billion and a bit ahead of Engler's recommended \$2.92 billion.

- Pupil count — continue counting pupils on the fourth Friday of the fall semester. Engler wanted to use the previous year's average daily attendance — which would have hurt districts with high absentee rates. Detroit is one such district.

- Social Security — still in, but phased out over five years. The Senate bill would raise the total tab to \$450 million from the current \$443 million. Engler wanted to zero it out, let local districts pay their own and put the money into the school aid formula — helping poor districts, hurting the well-off.

- Tax-base sharing — still in. Engler wanted to get rid of it in return for eliminating Social Security payments from state.

- Municipal overburden — still in. Engler wanted to eliminate this \$20 million item, which adds heavily taxed areas such as Detroit, and put the money in the general aid fund.

- Transportation for schools of

choice — \$13 million. Engler asked \$20 million. It's a new program.

- Foreign language incentive — \$15 per pupil. Current law also provides incentives for graduation, class size and quality.

- Strike penalty — a school district whose start is delayed by a strike would lose 1/180th of its aid for each day lost.

- Architects' plans — the state would establish a clearinghouse for school design plans. When a school is built, title to the plans and designs will be transferred to the state and available to other districts. Estimated savings: 10 to 15 percent in design fees.

How proposed plans affect local districts:

Here are Senate Fiscal Agency estimates for Observer & Eccentric-area schools in Oakland County, taking both local property taxes and state aid (deductions) of per-pupil revenue under (a) current year, (b) Engler's proposal, (c) the DeGrow bill and (d) the percentage difference between the DeGrow bill and the current year.

Avondale: (a) \$6,315 — (b) \$6,063 — (c) \$6,109, (d) down 3.3 percent.
Birmingham: (a) \$9,216 — (b) \$8,948 — (c) \$9,148, (d) down 0.7 percent.
Bloomfield Hills: (a) \$9,694 — (b) \$9,367 — (c) \$9,734, (d) up 0.4 percent.

Clarenceville: (a) \$6,103 — (b) \$6,151 — (c) \$6,268, (d) up 2.7 percent.
Farmington: (a) \$7,893 — (b) \$7,607 — (c) \$7,811, (d) down 1 percent.

Rochester: (a) \$5,852 — (b) \$5,712 — (c) \$5,782, (d) down 1.2 percent.
Southfield: (a) \$9,569 — (b) \$9,409 — (c) \$9,272, (d) down 3.3 percent.

Troy: (a) \$6,931 — (b) \$6,871 — (c) \$6,904, (d) down 0.4 percent.

Walled Lake: (a) \$6,636 — (b) \$6,304 — (c) \$6,391, (d) down 3.7 percent.

West Bloomfield: (a) \$7,157 — (b) \$7,046 — (c) \$7,174, (d) up 0.2 percent.

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The new president will serve at the "pleasure of the board" with no contract length specified.

Terms of the contract for Packard, first female president in the history of the Rochester university, were approved 5-0 by the OU Board of Trustees Wednesday.

Since 1985 Packard has been provost and vice chancellor for academic affairs and professor of curriculum and instruction at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga. Her record has been strong in fund-raising and affirmative action.

She holds a bachelor of fine arts degree from Syracuse University.



Sandra Packard

and master's and doctoral degrees in art education from Indiana University.

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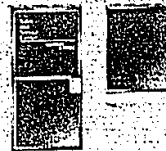
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