Panel urges adoption speed-up

Michigan will have a glut of chil-dren in foster care unless it can speed up adoptions, a state panel said.

"People are going to be held ac-countable for the time it takes," said

countable for the time it takes," suid Don Marengere, president of the Adoption Option and a member of Lt. Gov. Connie Binsfeld's commis-

sion. The courts, the Department of Social Services and agencies may be slow processing paper. A child may be ready. The delay isn't good for the child, the system or parents-to-be, the Bloomfield
Township adoptive father said.

TLEARNED a lot of questions I

should be asking," said Oakland Pro-bate Judge Juan E. Young, another commission member. Her court han-dles termination of parental custody

rights.
"Once a child is available, what happens then? What has been done to place the child in a permanent, lov-ing-home? What should the depart-

ping home. What should the department or agency be done?

"I don't take 'we working on it' for an answer.' said Young, a former scala worker before turning to law.

Marengere and Young wermong to people from government and the private sector appointed by

Gov. John Engler a year ago.

Engler himself appeared with the commission, Tuesday in Larsing to say the purpose of speeding up adoptions "was not pure cost avoidance.

Theoretically, these recommenda-

Inrs-and-centa issue."

ONE UNSTATED theme for Engler and Blinsfeld, both pro-life, is to encourage adoption as on alternative to abortion for teens.

Michigan records about 136,000 abortions and some 4,000 adoptions. In recent decades, abortions and out-of-wedlock births have soared while adoptions have dropped.

Idalf these adoptions are "related".

- a husband adopting his wife's children by a previous marriage.

The other half are "unrelated." About 1,000 of those are infant adoptions.

Some 1,200 are older children, nany with handicaps or health problems called "special needs.". Here is

"He's bright and he's still a young guy." McNomara said. "It wouldn't surprise me if he had his eye on high-er office."

er office."
Alexander is among those who be-lieve Patterson will succeed.
"Brooks can be anything he wants to be — a regional leader, a state leader," he said. "The only limit on Brooks is Brooks."
On that last statement, friends and

foes agree.
"This could be the chance to see what he's made of," Pernick said.

tions are cost neutral. It snot a dol-lars-and-cents issue,"

IN 1991, the Department of Social Services had 2,200 children waiting adoptive placement, said director fortald Miller.

The number of children becoming wards of the state and entering the system is now 1,600 a year. The current adoption rate in Michigan for state wards is 1,200 adoptions a year.

for state wards is 1,200 adoptions a year.

"Projecting an incremental increase of 400 children annually who are not adopted, there will be 5,000 children was thing adoptive families in the year 2000." said Miller, reading from the 125-page report titled "A Child Is Watting."

He praised Engler for allocating 53 million to help preserve and unity troubled families but spinned the commission's call for more user-friendly procedures.

procedures.

The goal, said Binsfeld, is that by 2000 "no child is waiting. The wait is over."

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Jury out on Patterson as leader

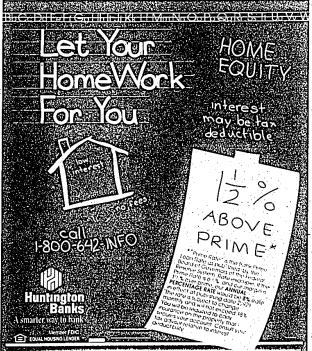
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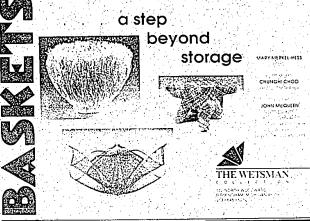
While they promise a serious challenge, Democrats know they are decided underdogs.

"Euphamistically, it's very challenging," Tucker said. "But we are going to take this race very serious-

If the county executive's post is a challenge, it's also an opportunity. Foiled in hids for senator, governor, attorney general, the county executive's post could be Patterson's last, best chance to prove himself a major patient floure.









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