

Senate OKs 'education warranty'

By TIM RICHARD
STAFF WRITER

Employers would be guaranteed that new high school graduates they hire will be competent in basic job skills under two controversial bills passed by the Michigan Senate.

High schools would be required to retrain workers found to be unskilled — at the graduating schools' expense.

"If you purchase a defective product from a store, you take it back. The same principle applies here," said sponsor Michael Bouchard, chair of the Senate Education Committee. "Our schools must take responsibility for the students they graduate."

Opponents said the bills would create more bureaucracy and lawsuits.

The bills were passed on 24 to 12 votes.

Supporting them were Republicans Bouchard, Met Dumackis of Lake Orion, Robert Cook of Northville and David Honigman

of West Bloomfield and Democrat William Faust of Westland.

Opposed were Democrats Jack Faxon of Farmington Hills and George Z. Hart of Dearborn.

The bills split both parties — 20 Republicans and four Democrats voted yes; 10 Democrats and two Republicans voted no.

Gov. John Engler supports the measure, which go to the House after the Easter break.

"Reluctantly," so did Sen. De-

bie Stabenow, D-Lansing, a Democratic hopeful for governor. "The concept is good," said Stabenow, adding, "It seems to me we're putting a huge crutch on the system, and I have very, very serious concerns about that."

"It sets up another level of testing," said Faxon, a former teacher and doubter about the Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP). "Warranting an education," he added, "would open up

potential sources of litigation." Sen. Doug Carl, R-Utica, called this bill "fiscally irresponsible," saying costs of requiring remedial instruction hadn't been determined.

Senate minority floor leader John Cherry, D-Clio, opposed the bill because MEAP test standards are too low for the world of work. "It means outcomes within a content area in math, science or reading that is assessed in the 10th or 11th grade MEAP test."

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