

March ballot plan affects state constitution

By TIM RICHARD
STAFF WRITER

Gov. Engler keeps talking about the March 16 ballot proposal as if only increasing the sales tax were involved. What else are we voting on?

A. Lots — Proposal A has more than 900 words and affects six sections of the Michigan Constitution.

Even if you read all the fine print, you won't see many changes because they are in laws "fied barred" to passage of Proposal A.

Proposal A will:

- Raise the sales tax rate from 4 percent, where it has been since the 1960s, to 6 percent.
- Constitutionally enshrine the extra 2 cents for the school aid fund. The statutory plan enshrine an income tax increase for the school aid fund, but Engler will argue that a future Legislature could tamper with that. If Proposal A is passed, only voters may change the earmarking.
- Cap property assessment increases at the rate of inflation or 6 percent, whichever is less.
- Raise the real estate transfer tax to \$2.11 per \$1,000 of valuation. The Legislature passed a law raising it to \$1.11 from the current 11 cents.
- Nullify a law raising the income tax rate to 6 percent from the current 4.6 percent, and lower that rate to 4.4 percent.
- Nullify the law raising the personal exemption to \$3,000 and keep it at \$2,100.
- Nullify a law raising the single business tax rate to 2.75 percent and keep it at 2.35 percent.
- Roll down property taxes on

homesteads from 12 mills under the statutory plan to 6 mills. Businesses and second homes would pay 24 mills under either plan. Under Proposal A, it takes a three-fourths vote of all legislators to alter those rates.

Q. I live in one of those so-called "rich" school districts that spends far more than \$6,500 per pupil. The state would reimburse us only to \$6,500. To get the rest, we'd

have to vote "hold harmless" millage. Would Proposal A affect us?

A. Yes, quite a bit. Under the statutory plan, you could levy a supplemental property tax on both business and, homestead property.

Proposal A would limit your district to a supplemental tax only on homestead property — until you reached 18 mills. After that point, the local tax would ap-

ply to both kinds of property.

Q. When do all these tax changes take effect?

A. Most tax changes, under both the statutory and ballot plans, take effect May 1. Exception: the real estate transfer tax would take effect next Jan. 1, 1995.

Q. I'm going to be in Florida March 16. When can I get an absentee ballot?

A. Right now, according to Sec-

retary of State Richard Austin.

You may obtain an absentee ballot from your city or township clerk if you plan to be out of town on election day, if you are age 60 or older, or if you're unable to vote without assistance.

Q. I'd like to talk to Gov. John Engler about some tax ideas I have. How do I get to him?

A. You need an appointment. Engler boasts his "open door"

policy has drawn 700 people. He won't see organized interest groups under this procedure — only individuals.

For a form to schedule a visit, write to: "Open Door," Governor's Office, PO Box 300013, Lansing 48909.

This newspaper will try to answer every question of general interest on the school tax reform plan. By touch-tone, call (313) 953-2047, Ext. 1831.

Seminar builds confidence

An Oakland University Continuum Center seminar called "Confidence Building: Taking the Plunge" meets 7-10 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 10, at the Rochester Community House.

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