

COUNTY News

Both sides applaud 'zero jobless' goal

BY TIM RICHARD
STAFF WRITER

Suburban legislators from both parties had mostly good things to say about Gov. John Engler's plan to remove work obstacles for welfare recipients.

The administration's goal: a zero jobless rate among welfare clients. The means: \$30 million for child care in six test areas, including a Detroit neighborhood and suburban Romulus.

"That's a good idea. I agree 100 percent," said Sen. David Honigman, R-West Bloomfield, who has handled many labor issues in his legislative career.

"Two of the biggest barriers to people leaving welfare are 1) day care and 2) transportation. The Upjohn Institute (a Kalamazoo foundation) studied the causes of unemployment among welfare mothers and found lack of day care was the biggest barrier."

"It (day care) is pretty expensive, but in the long run it's worth it," Honigman said. But rather than test it in six areas — including Midland, Ottawa, Alpena and

Menominee counties — Honigman said the plan should be implemented statewide.

"On the surface," said Sen. Gary Peters, D-Bloomfield Township, "it looks positive." But the freshman senator said a hike in the minimum wage and his earned income tax credit "may be more efficient than just providing day care."

"Eighty percent (of welfare clients) are off in two years, but the jobs they get don't pay a living wage. Our minimum wage is still below the poverty level," said Peters, who was part of a four-Democrat panel issuing a televised response to Engler's State of the State speech Wednesday evening.

"It's a good idea when you can move somebody from assistance to independence," said Sen. Michael Bouchard, R-Birmingham. He called the \$30 million for day care "a front-end load to make long-term savings," adding his own 1996 priority is legislation to protect children from abuse.

"They've been working on that

for four months," said Sen. Matt Dunaskiss, R-Lake Orion. "It makes sense. Michigan is very clearly going to lead welfare reform... with or without the federal government."

"Day care is a very critical issue," agreed Rep. Maxine Berman, D-Southfield. "Two-thirds of minimum wage workers are women. Of those, 75 percent of their earnings go for day care. You have to ask yourself why you're working if you're not bringing home any money. And it's got to be quality day care."

"If they (welfare clients) can keep Medicaid and get transportation, you (employers) would have people crawling all over you for jobs," Berman added.

"One of the biggest impediments to a mother with small children is the lack of qualified day care," said Rep. Barbara Dobb, R-Union Lake. "It's not just a problem for welfare recipients, but it's exacerbated for someone on welfare."

"Michigan is on the right road," said Rep. John Jamian, R-Bloomfield Township.

Young, aspiring artists encouraged to enter contest

Aspiring artists aged 6-17 are being encouraged by the state to enter an international aviation art contest on the theme "Airfield."

The Michigan Department of Transportation (M-DOT) Bureau of Aeronautics said the deadline is Feb. 16.

Entries will be judged in three age groups: 6-9, 10-13 and 14-17. Judges will select first, second and third place finishers at the state level, with each first-place winner advancing to the national

competition in Washington, D.C. National winners will compete with entries from around the globe in late spring. In four years, Michigan has produced three national winners. One, Jeff Grocky of Muskegon, placed first internationally in 1992.

Artists may use any of these media: color crayons, watercolor, acrylic, oil, indelible marker pens, felt-tip pens, soft ball-point pens and indelible ink.

The annual contest is aimed at

encouraging youths to become more familiar with and participate in aeronautics, engineering and sciences. Sponsors include the National Aeronautic Association, the National Association of State Aviation Officials, the Federal Aviation Administration and the Federation Aeronautic Internationale.

For an official entry form write to: Michigan Bureau of Aeronautics, Aviation Art Contest, 2700 E. Airport Service Dr., Lansing, MI 48906; or phone 517-335-9977.



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