## Oakland Schools gains new deputy superintendent

One of Michigan's most effec-tive lobbyists is taking an inside job after 30 years as an operative

tive lobbyists is taking an inside job after 30 years as an operative in Lansing.

Rick Simonson, 47, will become deputy superintendent for day-to-day operations for the Oakland Intermediate School District in Pontiae, replacing the retiring Herm Dick.

"I started as a House page 30 years age last January. They used high school students then. We went home the first Monday of the month to get assignments. We went home the first Monday of the month to get assignments. We worked all day and studied at night with a tutor," Simonson recalled in an interview in his favorite haunt, the rotunda outside the Senate chamber.

He was a senior at Baldwin High School, half-way between Grand Rapids and Traverse City, when his political career started.

"I graduated from high school

Grand Rapids and Traverse City, when his political career started.

It graduated from high school in the poorest county in the state, Lake, and spent most of my adult life working for the richest county in the state, Oakland, he said.

Polls by Insaid Michigan Politics, conducted by politician, conducted by politician turned-seribe Bill Ballenger, consistently have rated Simonson as one of the most effective governmental lobbyists in the state—at or near first place most year.

"Expertise, judgment and ded Schools Suparintendent Immes Redmond." His demenon is one of gentle professionalism. He does not beat his own drum.



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"He is responsible for relations between educational communities and legislative offairs. He tells the truth, not what you want to hear. He's a good public speaker," Redmond said.

Local reporters writing sanchool aid stories quoto Simonson constantly. Where legislators posture and local officials beat their breasts, Simonson carned a reputation for being the most understandable, closest to the truth and most mathematically truth and most mathematically

After high school, Simonson went to Albion College to earn two bachelor of arts degrees – in political science and economicabusiness.

Tetarted with Sen. Don Bishop (R-Rochester) and was with him for a decade. Then I moved to Son. Rick Feesler (R-Union Lake) and was with him almost adecade, he recalled.

Feesler had been something of a minority back-bencher in his House and early Senate service. Then in 1983 voters recalled two

Democratic state senator and turned control of that chamber over to John Engler and Republi-cans. Fessler blossomed as committee chair and negotiator.

"My first day in the Capitol, Bob Waldron (R-Grosse Pointe) was elected spenker of the House. There was a 55-55 parti-san split. Yet that term saw major progress - the income tax, major environmental legislation, special education.

major environmental legislation, special education.

"The 1993-4 torm was deja vu all over again," he said. That was when Republicans and Democrats again shared 55-55 control of the House But I was the heavy to the said.

His final two months as lobby-ist for Oakland public schools may be among Simonson's most important. He is working on a formula to boost aid to school districts with growing enroll-ments amid fierce competition

His successor hasn't been named yet. "There were 120 who applied when I got it," Simonson-said. "There will be no shortage

