

Dems fail to halt changes to job agency

State Capitol capsules:

No override

House Democrats, despite their 58-52 majority, failed Oct. 1 to override Gov. John Engler's executive order reorganizing the Michigan Employment Security Agency.

Engler's order, which took effect Oct. 6, separates the job search functions (in the Jobs Commission) from the unemployment compensation function (in the Consumer and Industry Services Department).

The House vote was 54-49 with seven absent. Five of the seven absentees were Democrats. Here is how area lawmakers voted on the override:

Yes — Democrat Nancy Quarles of Southfield.

No — Republicans Penny Criseman of Rochester, Barbara Dobb of Union Lake, Patricia Godchaux of Birmingham, Shirley Johnson of Royal Oak, Greg Kaza of Rochester Hills, Tom Middleton of Orionville, Andrew Rackowski of Farmington Hills.

The National Federation of Independent Business supported Engler's order.

The Service Employees International Union, which represents state employees at MESA, called the order "another short-sighted attempt on the part of the administration to privatize essential governmental services."

"We believe that the proposed reorganization will result in office closings throughout the state," said president Victoria Cook.

SEIU said separating the functions would put more overhead cost burdens on the unemployment benefits system.

Pension passes

House Republicans failed in their Sept. 25 attempt to block what they called "excessive retirement benefits to state psychiatric workers" affected by the closure of three hospitals — Clinton Valley Center in Pontiac, Detroit Psychiatric Institute and Pheasant Ridge in Kalamazoo.

The pension bill was sponsored by Rep. Eileen DeHart, D-Westland. Some 60 employees are affected, 18 under 60 years of age.

"It's a travesty that Michigan taxpayers are forced to pay full pensions to 46-year-olds in the prime of their working careers,"

said Republican Kim Rhead of Sandusky. "I don't think it's unreasonable for employees to wait until they are 55 before collecting one of the most lucrative pensions in the country."

Rhead's amendment to raise the minimum retirement age to 55 received a 50-49 vote, six short of the minimum.

All area Republicans voted yes except Barbara Dobb, of Union Lake, who voted no, and Gerald Law, of Plymouth, who was absent.

All area Democrats voted no. DeHart's House Bill 5038 was passed 57-47, with Dobb voting yes with the Democrats. The bill was sent to the Senate, where a 21-16 Republican majority is likely to modify it.

Protesting its passage in a joint statement were Republicans Deborah Whyman of Canton, Tom Middleton of Orionville and Nancy Cassia of Novi. "I do not believe that any employee, private or public, should be allowed to retire at less than 50. HB 5038 allows such employees to retire with full pension benefits."

Appointments

Gov. John Engler has appointed:

ed: Dick Gabrys of Bloomfield Hills to the Board of Accountancy, which licenses public accountants and firms. Gabrys is vice chair of Deloitte & Touche LLP. His term runs until June 30, 2001.

Lucille Kelley of Clarkston to the Michigan Board of Counseling, which licenses professional counselors. Kelley is a self-employed counseling consultant who will represent professionals for a term ending June 30, 2001.

Elizabeth Chappell of Bloomfield Hills to the Michigan Economic Growth Authority. She is president and CEO of the Chappell Group and will represent the private sector.

Carl Evans of Commerce and Mara Ghafari of Bloomfield Hills to the State Building Authority, which is responsible for construction and acquisition of facilities by the state. Evans is president of Plumbing and Heating Industry of Detroit. Ghafari is general counsel for Ghafari Associates, Inc., a Dearborn architectural, engineering and management firm.

Several area residents were appointed to the 20-member Governor's Workforce Commission,

which reviews and monitors state job training program and plans. They include:

■ Mark Alexander, of DeWitt, administrative assistant to AFL-CIO president Frank Garrison. Alexander will represent organized labor.

■ Juanita L. Pierman, Auburn Hills, vice president of governmental affairs for Kelly Services. She will represent private sector business.

■ Ignacio Salazar, Farmington Hills, president of SER Metro-Detroit Jobs for Progress.

■ Frank Venegas Jr., Howell, president, CEO and owner of Ideal Steel and Builders' Supplies.

Four members were appointed to the Midwestern Higher Education Commission, which studies issues in higher education. They include:

■ Rep. Kirk Profit, D-Ypsilanti, representing the speaker of the House.

■ Sen. John J.H. Schwarz, R-Battle Creek, representing the Senate majority leader.

■ Mark Murray, Lansing, state budget director.

■ Bill Sederburg, Big Rapids, president of Ferris State University.

OU celebrates Hispanic fest in voice, taste

Oakland University plans a Hispanic celebration Oct. 9-10 to commemorate National Hispanic Heritage Month. "A World of Difference" features the following events at Oakland Center:

■ Oct. 9 — Hispanic Business Forum: Doing Business in Latin America. A forum exploring the viability of developing markets in Hispanic countries and issues related to NAFTA. What does it take to succeed as a business in Latin America? What do corporations and entrepreneurs need to know about Hispanic culture? Noon, Fireside Lounge.

Hispanic Voices — Celebration of poetry and literature from Spain and the Americas. 7 p.m., Rooms 2126 and 127.

■ Oct. 10 — Latin American TasteFest and Mercado. Taste free samples of Hispanic foods while experiencing the beautiful paintings, sculptures and glass artistry, melodies and Mercado (marketplace) of the Latin American world. 11 a.m.-2 p.m., Heritage Room.

Hispanic art, courtesy of Dos Manos in Royal Oak, is on display at Kresge Library through the first week of November.

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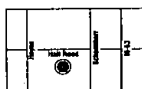
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