Governor still hopes for state takeover of roads

As he prepares to run for a third consecutive term as governor of Michigan, John Engler is confident that voters will recognize the accomplishments of his administration.

"I expect to run next year," Engler told the editorial board of The Observer & Eccentric Newspapers Tuesday, "and I expect to be re-elected."

The meeting took about 50 minutes, with the governor answering questions about a wide range of topics. They included:

answering queetions about a wide range of topics. They included a state of the state to take jurisdiction of some 9,000 roads in Michigan — and more than 300 in Oakland County — is still the best way to implement much-needed repairs.

The governor has made that proposal over the last three years only to meet stiff opposition from Oakland officials, including county executive L. Brooks Patterson, who are concerned about losing local control and federal and state funding.

'I think some of the inefficiencies (in building and maintaining roads) can be wrung out of the system through better coordination, 'said Engler, who acknowledged he will continue to push for state control.

Local officials are resisting state control, he said, because they don't like change. 'But my priorities are getting the roads fixed.' Local officials want to fix the roads, Engler said, 'but they're not doing the job,' and axpayers are frustrated. They want the roads fixed, he said, byto they for the text few decades has served them (taxpayers) well.' Yet local officials say they want to text as the seads of the said of the said over the last few decades has served them (taxpayers) well.' Yet local officials say they want

served them (taxpayers) well. Yet local officials say they want

"They (local officials) should stop telling me what a good job they're doing and fix the roads,"

Engler said.

The overnor said he considers
Patterson to be 'a good ally and
a close friend.' But the county
executive is not embracing state
takeover of local roads 'because
he's under the spell of Brent
Bair,' the managing director of
the county road commission
"Brent Bair's answer (to road

problems) is a 12-cent increase in the gaseline tax," said the governor. The public won't support that, and neither do I.

Informed of Englor's comments, Bair Wednesday said his proposal for a 12-cent hike in the association said was needed to a section of the section of the

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dignify that comment with a response."
Engler said the state has plans in place to fix the roads, with as much as \$600 million to be derived under the Build Michigan II program. In the near future, Engler predicted other states will be asying, "Why can't our roads be like Michigan's?"
Public education: The governor said he continues to have problems with teacher unions and associations because. They are more interested in collective bargaining, working conditions and union issues instead of improving the quality of education.

Feedback in response to high

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mproving ine quanty of education."
Feedback in response to high
school proficiency tests — even
the negative feedback from
Birmingham and Troy — is
important, said Engler, because
the test must be improved.

He is opposed to minimum
standards tests. But Engler said
he is receptive to foderal proposale for tests to assess students.
Such tests would helpful because
we would have the ability to
benchmark all students to see
how they measure up, 'he said.

Affirmative action: State
Rap. David Jay and others are
challenging affirmative action
policies at the University of
Michigan. That issue will be
resolved in the courts, said
Engler.

As a possible alternative, universities should consider promoting diversity on earnyms with
affirmative action based on conomic need instead of racial classifications. "That's acting affirmatively, but in a constitutional
fashion," Eagler said.

Universities promoting diversity in that way will not be challenged on constitutional
grounds, the governor said.

■ Michigan's system of higher education: The state's universities are a great asset to Michigan and its residents. Engier said. Those universities are in excellent shape because Michigan is the only state to address needs without raising taxes or cutting education budgets, he said.

Oakland University is outstanding for several reasons. Engier said, including its will ingness to form partnerships with husinesses, including the Chrysler Tech Center. Out should be patting themselves on the back for some of the things they're doing so well," said Engler. The future for OU is very bright.

■ Membership on the governing board at colleges and universities: Engler reiterated his position that the Board of Regents at the University of Michigan — and the boards of trustees at other universities: Saisuld be appointed rather than elected.

There can still be ineffective

trustees at other universities abould be appointed rather than elected.

"There can still be inoffective boards if they're appointed," he said. "But somebody — the governor— is held responsible."

Voters can't adequately identify the candidates for university boards, Engler insisted, and vores are not adequately aware of qualifications. "Voters don't know them, and they don't held them accountable," he said. He would be willing to forego making any appointments, Engler said. But future governors would have a bigger pool of candidates to consider and they could more appropriately hold them accountable, he insisted, because more people are willing to be considered for appointment rather than run for election.

"State prisons: "I've been in favor of locking up dangerous and violent criminals," Engler said, not just building new prisons. "I'believe it's better to put criminals in ascure prisons rather than neighborhood lock.

criminals in secure prisons rather than neighborhood lock

rather than neighborhood lockupes."
Furthermore, he's prepared to
ask the legislature for more prisons located in areas which comwant them, the governor said.
There's a causal relation
between longer prison terms and
the recent reduction in violent
crimes, Engler said. The crime
rate has been going down over
the last five years.

"Maybe people are behaving," he said. "But just maybe the crime rate is geing down because criminals are staying in prison longer and not getting out to commit repeat offenses.

"I don't like to build prisons," Engler said. "I'd rather be closing them. But I'm not prepared to let the doors swing open and let people out."

Prisons continue to be a drag on the economy, he said. The state work force has been reduced by 12 percent over the last eight years, he said. "But the number of correctional facility workors (guards) has increased. One of four state jobs are correctional workers."

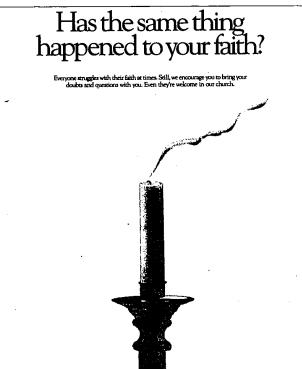
**Ecusinos: "I continue to be opposed to casinos," said Engler. They have changed the quality of life in communities where they're located, he said, and they've created somo jobs.

"But their total impact is still uncertain," he insisted. We have to keep asking, 'Are they good or not?"



Expects re-election: Gov. John Engler told the Observer & Eccentric editorial board that he will run for office again and expects to be re-elected.





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