

House tones down school violence bills

BY TIM RICHARD
STAFF WRITER

STATE GOVERNMENT

A coalition of the most liberal and conservative state representatives last month toned down a package of school violence bills before passing them 104-0 and sending them to the Senate.

The House voted 56-41 to amend a key bill by removing authority for a teacher unilaterally to suspend a student from a class. The amendment was sponsored by Rep. Deborah Cherry, D-Burton, a former school administrator.

"We passed a new School Code in 1996," said Rep. Alan Crago, R-DeWitt, who supported the Cherry amendment. "A school board can give a teacher the authority to suspend. They have the power right now."

"But we've cut the principal and school board out (with the original bill). We have the Legislature acting as a super school board," said Crago, one of the House's most conservative members.

Added Rep. James Agee, D-Muskegon, one of the most liberal. "School districts have not put this (teacher's power) to suspend

students) in their contracts. We should adopt the Cherry amendment."

Here is how Eccentricist area lawmakers voted on the Cherry amendment:

YES - Tom Middleton, R-Ortonville.

NO - Penny Crissman, R-Rochester, Barbara Dobb, R-Union Lake, Patricia Godchaux, R-Birmingham, Shirley Johnson, R-Royal Oak, Greg Kaza, R-Rochester Hills, Andrew Raczowski, R-Farmington Hills.

ABSENT - Nancy Quarles, D-Southfield.

The main bill, HB 5482, calls for school districts to adopt a policy defining the conduct for which a student can be suspended from a class or activity.

Other bills in the package area:

HB 4075 - Which requires the county prosecutor to inform each district of school employees convicted of any felony or misdemeanor involving children.

HB 5699 - Which creates an intervention and prevention

grant program for juvenile violence and crime.

HB 5702 - Which establishes an anti-gang assistance team using the community policing programs with schools.

HB 5703 - Which allows a prosecutor to enhance penalties for crimes committed against a teacher, administrator, school employee, volunteer or student.

HB 5707 - Which makes it a felony for a student to falsely report criminal sexual conduct or assault in order to change schools. Penalties include four years in prison and a fine.

Republicans, including House GOP leader Ken Sikkema of Grandville, had publicly pressured Democrats for a vote on the measures, unveiled in January.

Some Democrats accused Republicans of trumpeting the measures in order to discredit public schools and make election year campaign fodder.

Refer to the bill number when writing to your state senator, State Capitol, PO Box 30036, Lansing 48909.

OCC roaring with pride over its share of new scholarships

BY TIM RICHARD
STAFF WRITER

A "lion's share" of a new state scholarship program is going to Oakland Community College students.

"We are proud that we were singled out for the lion's share of Governor's Scholarships," OCC Chancellor Richard Thompson said.

OCC will receive \$1.6 million of the \$20 million pot. It will help pay for 1,800 scholarships - more than double the number of the next highest provider, neighboring Macomb Community College.

Thompson said the 1,800 scholarships will cover a two-year cycle and be given to about 750 students because some will be in two-year associate degree programs and others in shorter certificate programs.

There is also \$30 million for tech centers - five or six in the state," Thompson added. "One by law will go to Focus:HOPE. The state is accepting proposals until mid-August. The grants probably will be announced in late October. We will be a candidate."

"We are working on getting our partners lined up in business, industry and the high schools along with Walsh College and Lawrence Technological University."

Gov. John Engler announced the \$50 million plan to train Michigan residents for "gold collar jobs" during his state of the state address. They are defined as well-paid jobs requiring a high level of skill but not a four-year university degree.

Scholarships cover half the cost of books, fees and tuition for two years of full-time study or four years of part-time study.

Some of OCC's eligible programs:

Two-year credit - aviation management, licensed practical nursing, registered nursing, dental hygiene, medical assistant, pre-engineering, computer aided design, computer information systems, construction management.

One-year credit - practical nursing, consumer information systems user group, business information systems certificate, multi-media.

Non-credit - carpenter framers, machine tool technology, systems administration, facilities maintenance, productivity software, skilled trades pre-apprenticeship, COBOL programmer, architectural computer-aided design, Microsoft certification.

"We surveyed all of our areas," said Thompson. "The Oakland County Workforce Development Board came back with suggestions that we extend the list slightly, so we did."

Applicants should begin applying immediately, both for admission to OCC and for scholarships. There is no application charge. The fall semester begins Sept. 3.

To become eligible, applicants must be Michigan residents and enroll at OCC. Forms are available at each of the five campus admissions offices (Highland Lakes, Orchard Ridge, Southfield, Royal Oak and Auburn Hills) and at the district office in Bloomfield Hills.

Selections are made on academic merit and financial need, with consideration for female and minority applicants.

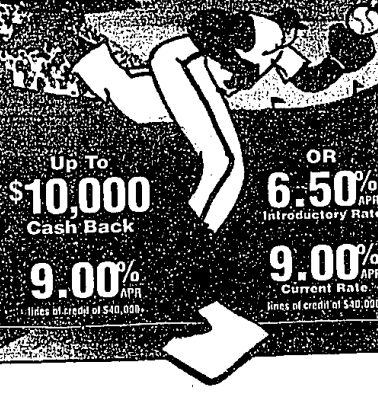
Candidates who have completed applications must make an appointment with an academic advisor at any of the five campuses.

Additional information is available by calling Kristine Erickson at OCC's Governor's Scholarship hot line, (248) 640-1543.

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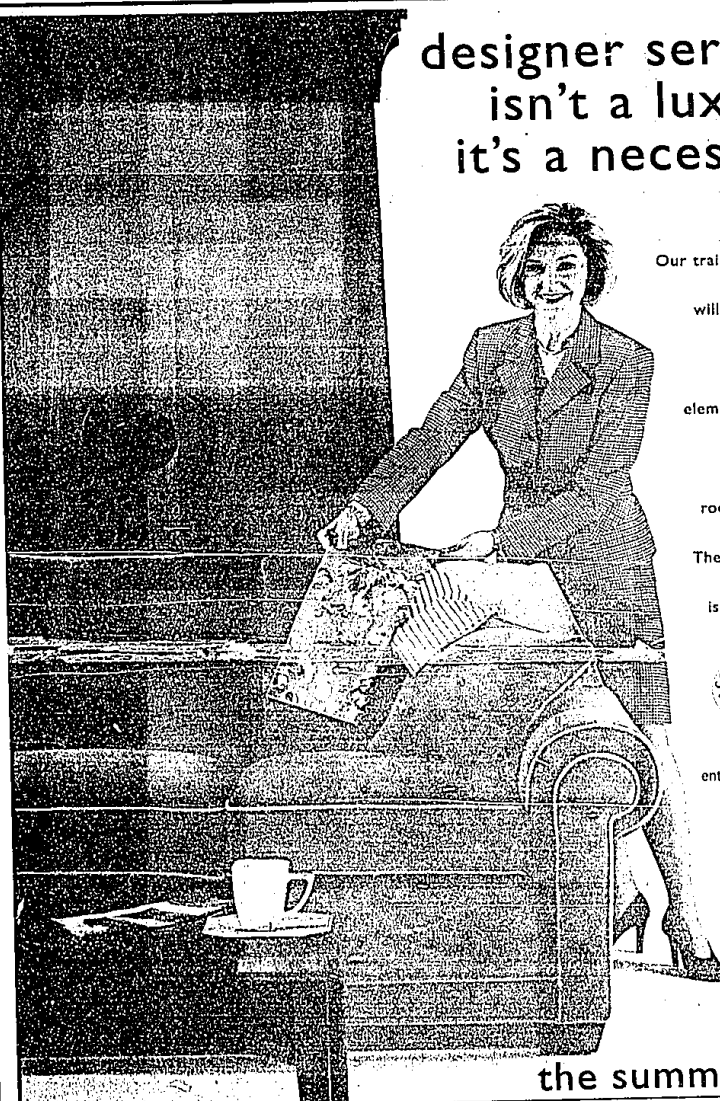
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