

Credit Beardmore for taking stand for school improvements

Dorothy Beardmore ended her term as president of the Michigan State Board of Education at the turn of the year. Her involvement in K-12 education runs more than 30 years and stands as a monument to the ways citizen participation in the governance of our state improves the lives of all of us.

With a freshly-minted B.A. from Cornell, Beardmore and her husband moved to Rochester, where she got involved from the get-go in community activities.

She volunteered to be a member of a committee to pick a site for the second high school. Of course,

"As I was the only woman on a 12-man committee, you knew perfectly well who got to be secretary," she explains. Then she realized the school her kids were attending was newly opened and lacked a library, so she and some other volunteers went out and created a library.

Beardmore adds, "At a certain point, somebody said, 'If you're going to do all this, why don't you go on the school board?' and so I ran."

She was elected to the Rochester school board in 1967, which was also the year collective bargaining with teachers' unions started in Michigan.

She served on the Rochester school board for eight years and, in addition, served 12 years on the Intermediate School Board, taking the seat of someone who made a habit of skipping meetings."

So when she ran for the State Board of Education in 1984, Dorothy Beardmore had immersed herself in all aspects of K-12 education for more than 20 years. "I decided to run because I didn't like the way the state board was responding to *A Nation at Risk*, the celebrated report on schools in America that coined the phrase 'a rising tide of mediocrity'."

She ran successfully for a second term in 1994, serving as a persistent, knowledgeable voice of sanity on a board that was dominated by noisy, right-wing ideologues who were more interested in tearing down the public schools than in reforming them. A moderate Republican in the mold of former Gov. William G. Milliken, Beardmore was elected president of the state board in 1998, winning votes from both Republicans and Democrats.

I first met Dorothy Beardmore in the mid-1980s when I was chairing the Michigan Job Training Coordinating Council. I had been invited to give a speech to a statewide conference that



Phil Power

included a bunch of teachers and education administrators. I said various inflammatory things about schools and how they didn't teach kids the skills they needed to get good-paying jobs.

After I finished, I was approached by a school-marmish woman, tall, with piercing eyes and an angular jaw who in a gentle way upbraided me for what I considered minor inaccuracies. But as we talked, I discovered that Dorothy Beardmore knew more about K-12 education in Michigan than anybody I had ever met and that she was prepared to talk about it as long as I was able to listen.

School reform in Michigan simply would not have taken place without Dorothy Beardmore's career in education.

She promoted the new rules for teacher certification in 1985 that brought teacher credentials into the 20th century. She spearheaded Public Act 25, requiring schools to submit regular school improvement plans.

She understood from the start that improving

School reform in Michigan simply would not have taken place without Dorothy Beardmore.



Mike Malott

Better explanation of concealed gun law is needed

Every journalist who has written about Michigan's reformed concealed gun law has concluded that the changes will make it "easier" to get a permit, that more people will be allowed to carry concealed weapons.

Proponents dispute such conclusions.

They argue the new law — approved by lawmakers last month, signed by Gov. John Engler Tuesday, and scheduled to take effect in July — is the most restrictive of any state that has a "must issue" law for CCW permits (and that appears to be true.)

They say some who now hold permits won't be able to get them under the revised law (which may also be true.) The new law prohibits even those with CCW permits from taking guns into certain types of buildings, such as schools, daycare centers, arenas, bars, hospitals, casinos and churches (and that much is definitely correct.)

In the final days of the debate in lame duck session, proponents said they had no idea how many new guns would be on the streets, or even whether there would be more out there at all.

Rep. Mike Green, R-Mayville, who once estimated that the number of additional permit holders would come to something like 200,000, admitted he'd pulled that number out of thin air. Sen. Bill Bullard, R-Highland, contended that no one knew what the real numbers would be, and that the only way to find out for sure would be to pass the bill and see what happened.

The information shared with the press and public about the likely effect of the changes consisted of some graphs that purportedly showed crime going up in other states as the number of gun permits increased. But the sheets were so incomplete as to be indecipherable. They lacked a key to explain what the graphs supposedly showed.

They even failed to include a source so that the information could be verified. Such a lack of data about the likely result of a bill is surprising in a state capital where the problem is usually just the opposite, where typically the difficulty is making sense out of information overload.

Proponents will also argue that the bill's new requirement for gun safety training will discourage some would-be permit applicants, who would rather not bother with the class even if it means foregoing getting their CCW permit.

I find that one hard to believe. I think of 15 and 16 year olds — who are not known to be the most motivated or persistent group of people (and I can say that because I was that age myself once). Yet nearly everyone in that age group is willing to undergo a lot more training and course work to get the permits they seem to want very badly, their driver's licenses.

I don't see that a requirement for eight hours of

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firearms training, which must include three hours on the firing range, as much of a disincentive.

So long as you are willing to spend that much time in a class and are at least 21, don't have a criminal record, and don't have a history of mental illness, the new law says local gun boards will give you a permit.

That is, the law will say that if it is allowed to go into effect. Wayne County Prosecutor Mike Duggan and a coalition of police and prosecutors from across the state are planning to run a petition drive aimed at putting the law to a referendum on the election ballot in November 2002.

Hopefully, the quality of information about what the change will truly do will improve by

Frankly, the idea of passing legislation without such information to see what happens is a rather odd approach. And it would seem rather unnecessary, considering 30 other states have "shall issue" laws already.

Typically when other states have similar laws in effect, the folks in Lansing can make pretty accurate predictions about what their proposals are likely to do. Well, they can if they want to.

Mike Malott reports on the local implications of state and regional events. He can be reached by phone at (248) 634-8219 or by e-mail at mma10@homecomm.net

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