Make state government regularly review efficiency

Experts say it's the state's worst fiscal crisis in

20 years.

Numbers coming out of last week's state rev onue projection conference suggest the state gen-eral fund budget will be \$500 million (about 5



Gov. John Engler is proposing enormous state

budget reductions - from 5 to 10 percent - from every department. The cuts will have to be

every department. The cuts will have to be approved by a legislature already preoccupied to the point of obsession with next year's election and terrified of either cutting appropriations for favored programs or raising (or appearing to raise) taxes, or both.

Both Gov. Engler and state budget director Don Gilmer want to cut expenditures, maybe across the board, maybe not. Some legislators want to reduce the pain by tapping into the \$1 billion rainy day fund, while others are worried about the wisdom of draining the fund prematurely.

Some education officials want to postpone reductions in the state income tax and the Single Business Tax, a step that would increase state revenue by more than \$2.00 million. The Michigan Chamber of Commerce wants yet more tax cuts as well as reductions in unemployment insurance payments from business, while the Michigan Retailers Association has called for temporary climination of the state sales tax.

Frankly, I have no idea what our legislative, lobbying and political masters are going to wind up doing. As the constitution forbids deficit spending, I am moderately confident they'll wind

up doing something, although it won't be pretty during the developmental phrases.

While they're doing whatever it is, they might want to take up an old idea that still has plenty of juice. Way back in 1976, a volunteer citizen group called the Michigan Efficiency Task Force proposed 562 specific recommendations designed to improve management and organizational efficiency in state government.

The ideas ranged from relatively simple procedural changes to proposals for major departmental reorganizations and systems redesign. The task force's proposals wound up saving the state an estimated \$47 million in annual costs.

The task force's report has largely sat in dusty obscurity on library shelves ever since. It's the standard fate of "Blue Ribbon" citizen commissions, which normally start out in a frenzy of good intentions but wind up overtaken by events and then by general boredom. I should know; I was a member of the task force, and it took me a fair amount of rooting around to dig out the original report.

report.
A useful step to take now would be to recreate, by statute, a similar commission, charged with evaluating the effectiveness and efficiency of

state government. It should be composed of a bipartisan cross section of private-sector residents appointed by the governor and confirmed by the legislature. Most important, it should be convened and asked to report periodically – say, every five years – which makes it and its recommendations a permanent part of the state's political and policy landscape, always fresh and correspondingly difficult to lignore.

We already have state agencies devoted to making sure accounts are properly kept (the Auditor General) and making sure we don't have excessive and expensive regulations (the Office of Regulatory Reform).

But we don't have a group specifically charged with evaluating the organization and management of state government so as to reduce cost and waste. It won't solve our current budget crisis, but such a commission could make the next one a lot less severe.

lot less severe.

Phil Power is chairman of HomeTown Com-munications Network Inc., the company that owns this newspaper. He welcomes your com-ments, either by voice mail at (734) 953-2047, Ext. 1880, or by e-mail at ppower@ homecomm.net

Cable programming

Recently we released two In The Green shows on Info 12, one interviewing Ron Oliverie who is running against incumbent Mayor Nancy Bates and another with Joss Elson who is challenging for a Farmington Hills city council seat. Time and time again I have requested my program be put on at times after 4 p.m. but can never get them on.

council seat. Time and time again I have requested my program be put on at times after 4 p.m. but can never get them on.

The city government has its own separated channel, yet having their own channel doesn't seem to be enough for them. They repeatedly hog into prime time on the public access channel for government produced shows. The time supposedly made available to the community and independent producers.
Under the current Cable Commission, it seems political patronage has a lot more to do with what's going on the air than a first-come, first-served basis.

Political talk shows are not necessarily an early morning fair, but that seems to be the In The Green time slot. I have yet to see Ben Marks political talk show come on in the morning. Once it looked like I would get a night time slot; but oh no, I was preempted by Potpouria show, I guess it deem I thut to be on the Cable Commission; she's even been given back-to-back time slots in prime lime as well.

Life Talk, a show produced in Denton, Texas, is another show that seems to rate prime time on Info 12. The show repeatedly takes sympathy with the individuals who bomb abortion clinics. Haven't we had enough religious fundamentalist terrorism in this country?

aven't we had enough religious fun entalist terrorism in this country?

LE While I might feel politically supportive of some of the incumbent candidates in this year's race, a change is in order, the current patronage at SWOCC must go for the good of the community.

Eric Borregard Producer of In the Green

■ Sign complaints

Why is it that no matter how many years incumbents have in serving on our council and as mayor, they contin to ignore and break our zoning ordi-nances?

to ignore and oreak our zoning ordi-nances?

Every election we citizens are slapped in the face again by their refusal to not post lawn signs promoting their names on public property and street rights of way. Every election our city is littered along every main street with those ille-gally planted signs.

Even streets in the city of Farmington get Farmington Hills signs. Every year when I request answers from the Farm-ington Hills Zoning Department, I get the same answer: All candidates are given a copy of the ordinance guidelines for sign posting.

given a copy of the ordinance guideline; for sign posting.

There can be no scuse for their not knowing the ordinance. Those signs are not allowed except on private property and/or lawns. That means behind sidewalks, not between the ridewalk and street. If on vacant lots or property of vacant buildings, there is supposed to be permission from the actual property

owner. Does anyone believe that where there is a vacant corner or office building such as the one at 12 Mile and Drake, that all the candidates posting signs there have actually obtained permission? Give me a bronk.

Any informed citizen knows that the purpose for these signs when originally allowed was to allow property owners to support their favored candidate by allowing him/her to post a sign on his/her property. These candidates) must think that free speech means they are allowed to put them wherever they want to. They certainly don't have a problem with going after citizens who break other ordinances.

I've heard their excuses before. In the past, candidates have chaimed that they don't put out the signs, their campaign ordinances, then it must be with the full knowledge and approval of the candidates.

I'm tirred of my tax dollars being spent

dates. I'm tired of my tax dollars being spent every election time for zoning officials to drive around picking up political signs. I will not vote for any incumbent this year who still has signs up illegally on our streets before the election. There is still time for them to be removed by the candidates and/or their workers. I urge all voters to do the same.

Gene Manwaring

A THE RESIDENCE OF THE STATE OF

Bruce is committed

r s

This year, Farmington Hills has the opportunity to elect a new voice to the city commission. Randy Bruce has shown a commitment to our city and is full of ideas to make Farmington Hills an even better place to live.

Mr. Bruce has spent many hours on this campaign; walking door to door, talking to many citizens from every neighborhood and seeking advice from every segment of our community.

In the various candidate forums around town, Mr. Bruce has shown both an understanding of the issues facing us and a willingness to listen to the citizens ideas on a wide range of concerna.

We could do no better for our city than to vote for Randy Bruce for city council.

■ Supports Massey

Ken Massey will bring a breath of fresh air and a new tone to the Council and a new high standard for individual council members.

Ken Massey's keen ability to grasp and understand an issue and his orderly approach to solving problems is something our council needs. This is complemented by his openness and sincere concern for people, whether they be other community leaders, senior citizens, youth or neighbors. It is no wonder he has been dubbed "the people's candidate."

I was fortunate to have served on a candidate. "
I was fortunate to have served on a candidate committee with the opportunity to interview Ken Massey in depth. He is ready to move our city forward. And, most importantly, he will do it, side by side, will all be a part of building our future.

He is truly a "tax fighter" who will

our future. He is truly a "tax fighter" who will operate within budget and diligently look for ways to reduce taxes. To serve on the City Council is a challenge. I know. I have been there. Ken Massey is the candidate who is up to the challenge and who will make a difference. Donn Wolf

Former Council Member, Mayor and County Commissioner

Editor's Note: Additional letters to the editor can be found on page 10. Let-ters that raise so new issues or respond to issues raised in this edition will be published Sunday, Nov. 4.



*Lower priced item \$0% off, Sale Ends 11/8/01

