Common sense needed about tax cut windfall

So Michigan is going to get a \$655 million windfall from the feds, part of the big tax cut bill signed by President Bush last week. Even before the ink on the president's signature was dry, however, folks in Lansing were squabbling over how to spend the one-time windfall. What a structure

surprise. Grw. Jeunifer Granholm wants to earmark about half for Medicaid benefits for low-income Michiganders and reserve some more as a cush-ion for the state School Ahd Fund. But Senate Majority Leader Ken Sikkena announced – announced, not "proposed" – that \$338 million would be used to fully fund the Michigan Merit Award pro-gram.



Power

Michigan Merit Award pro-gram. Something like half of the graduating high school seniors in Michigan Score well enough on the Michigan Educational Mi Assessment Program test to win the \$22.00 merit scholarship to of college. Over the program's first three years, nearly 150,000 meri dents have applied for the arge and politically significant con-

dents have applied for the swards — a large and politically significant con-stitucncy. There with long memories (or those who recently had kids in high school) will remember how the Merit Award program got started. Exemitally, it was a brile gined up by former Gov. John Engler to encourage high school sen-iors to take the MEAP. Engler was facing a grow-ing korycott against the MEAP. Parents and kids alike complained that students were being tested 'ill they dropped — regular school exams and col-tige entrunce tests such as the SAT and ACT. For them, the MEAP was the straw that broke the camel's back.

Irge entruince tests such as the SAT and ACT. For them, the NEAT was the strinw that broke the camel's back. Teachers joined in, complaining they were expected to take extra time in class to teach to the set. And the percentage of students taking the MEAP – especially in college-bound districts like Birmingham, Farmington and East Lansing – plummeted, Fur those who felt the MEAP was a vital device in reforming the schools because it assessed what kids were actually learning out of the high school curriculum, collapse of the test would have been a disaster. Hence, universal approval for the Michigan Upert Award – espe-cially when times were flush. But evidence began piling up that much of the scholarship money was going to kida whose fami-lear radly aluft in teed it. Stories circulated about parents taking the merit money and using it to you cars for their kids when they headed off for college. And some people began complaining that public money was being used to subsidize kids

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Phil Power is the chairman of the board of the company that owns this newspaper. He would be pleased to get your reactions to this column either at (734) 953-2047 or at ppow-e#homecomm.net.

Motorcycle helmets do not prevent serious injuries



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