

Voters to get say on state income tax reform

By ERIC PETERS

State income tax reform has been suggested by the Michigan Citizens Lobby, whose successful petition drive places the issue on the November ballot for direct decision by voters.

More than 200,000 signatures filed on July 6 are sufficient to put the taxation to a vote. Co-director and founder of the Southfield-based group, Fred Ross, said that 40 per cent of the state's residents will benefit from the proposed state constitutional tax change.

Nearly two years ago, the citizens of Michigan used themselves as a tax cut by vote overwhelming to eliminate the sales tax on food and medicine, said Ross. "At that time the Citizens Lobby made a prom-

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With the help of more than a third of a million Michigan taxpayers, we have kept our promise," he said.

ROSS SAID that the proposed tax change would do essentially three things: give a tax cut to every taxpayer in the state who earns less than \$25,000 a year; provide Michigan with a fairer tax system and ensure that the state loses no money.

In addition, many taxpayers earning between \$25,000 and \$50,000 a year would also receive some relief. Working, retired and middle income citizens would have their tax burdens lowered and shifted to wealthier citizens, it was maintained.

The current blanket tax of 4.6 per cent would be lowered to 3.9 per cent for earnings up to \$20,000 plus \$1.80 for each member of the family. It would be raised to 9.3 per cent for those earnings over and above that limit. Thus a family of four with an income of \$50,000 would pay an effective rate of 6 per cent.

Ross emphasized that the scheme was not a "cash the rich" project and that even if the plan passed, more than half the state would still have higher income taxes than Michigan. Indeed, Michigan had no income tax before 1960.

Ross also noted that this plan will do nothing to change the manner in which taxes are calculated. They are figured on the basis of adjusted federal income tax net of actual income. He pointed out that those who would pay a higher tax are not really eligible for a disproportionate share of loopholes for both federal and state tax.

"AT PRESENT, our state-local tax system places a heavier burden on middle income taxpayers than on the wealthy, a totally unfair and unjustifiable situation," Ross stressed. "We simply want a tax system in which all pay their fair share."

Opposition will be strong, Ross predicted, and the fight will be bitter. He stated a suspicion that the Detroit Chamber of Commerce would represent those who stand to lose privileges by initiation of the changes. They are in the minority, so they are going to have to try to convince the issue in order to defeat us," he said.

Since its inception in 1973, the Michigan Citizens Lobby has initiated auto repair legislation, a generic prescription drug law repeal of the food and drug sales tax legislation against fraud by used car dealers and the so-called "sunbelt" legislation which would require every state agency or program to be evaluated every four years subject to termination.

Provisions circulated by the Lobby for the income tax change stated specific alterations to be instituted. How the proposal will actually read, however, will not be known until the Board of Canvassers makes its decision in August.

If people are going to create a change themselves, they have to understand the way it works, Ross said. Whereas very often, tax legislation is drawn intentionally to obscure our proposition had to be very clear.

"THE REFORM would shift a burden of \$200 million in state taxes from middle income taxpayers on to taxpayers with larger income to attempt to achieve overall equity. As it is now, the worker who earns \$20,000 a year pays more in state taxes proportionally than one who makes \$100,000," said Ross. He pointed to gasoline tax as costing the same in absolute dollars for rich and poor alike.

Property taxes, too, are based not on an owner's ability to pay, but on the value of the house and land. Each time income doubles, there is not a corresponding doubling of home value, noted Ross. A working-

OBITUARIES

STANLEY RUPES

Services for Stanley James Rupes, 62, Farmington, were July 9 at Our Lady of Mercy in Farmington. Burial was in Holy Sepulchre Cemetery in Southfield. Rupes died July 7 at Highland General Hospital following a short illness. An employee of William Beaumont Hospital, he is survived by his mother, Mrs. Caroline Rupes; brothers, Henry and Edward Rupes; three sisters, Mrs. Bernice Hysard, Mrs. Walter Sack and Mrs. Norman Fortier; and a sister-in-law, Mrs. John Rupes.

MARION CHARBONNEAU

Mrs. Marion Margaret Charbonneau, 68, of Farmington Hills, died June 21 at Beaumont General Hospital following a long illness. Services were at Our Lady of Sorrows in Farmington and burial was in Holy Sepulchre Cemetery, Southfield.

Mrs. Charbonneau, a housewife, was born in Michigan to John Jacob Van Buhler and Emma Brink and later married Lefroy Charbonneau.

She is survived by her two sons, Jack and Dennis Charbonneau; sister, Virginia Caswell; brother, Russell Van Buhler; eight grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

JAMES McLEER JR.

James J. McLeer, 29, of 3815 Sutter Lane, Farmington Hills, died July 7 from injuries sustained in an auto accident earlier that day. Services were at the Hill Chapel in Birmingham and burial was in Grandview Cemetery, Detroit.

McLeer, an assistant manager at the Northland Farmington Drugstore, was a Viet Nam veteran and a Southfield High School graduate who later attended Oakland Community College.

He is survived by his parents, Mr. and Mrs. James McLeer Sr.; one sister, Mrs. Ellen Joanne Van Housen; one brother, Derek; and his grandfather, Edward McLeer of Florida.

BETTY ALDRICH

Betty Marjorie Aldrich, 58, of Farmington Hills, died June 24 after an extended illness at Hendry Convalescent Center. Services were June 26 at the Leeves Sanctuary Funeral Home with the Rev. Thomas Wilson of St. John's Episcopal Church of Westland officiating. Burial was in Acacia Park Cemetery in Birmingham.

Mrs. Aldrich, a housewife, is survived by her husband, George.

CAMPBELL PATTERSON

Services for John Campbell Patterson, 76, of St. Louis, were June 25 at the Leeves Sanctuary Funeral Home in Farmington with the Rev. Morgan Roberts of the First Presbyterian Church of Birmingham officiating. Burial was in Glen Eden Memorial Park in Livonia.

Patterson, a former tool grinder at Sarto Machine and Tool, died June 22 at Providence Hospital. He is survived by his wife, Jane; sons, James and David; and three grandchildren.

RUTH BELLJORN

Ruth M. Belljorn, 72, Detroit, died June 30 at Grace Central Hospital of leukemia. Services were July 3 at Evergreen Lutheran Church with the Rev. Gary Bird officiating.

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