

Brotherton battles creeping tax hikes in state legislature

By JACKIE KLEIN

A constitutional amendment which would lower property taxes 50 to 70 percent is being proposed by state legislators.

The proposal by State Rep. Mark Silander, R-Three Rivers, is comprehensive and would have to be approved by the legislature and the voters before it could take effect, according to State Rep. Wilbur Brotherton. Brotherton is a Farmington Republican whose district also includes Southfield and Farmington Hills.

"If the legislature refuses to put the amendment on the next general election ballot, an effort will be made to place it there through a citizens petition drive," Brotherton said. "That method was used by Richard Headlee and his Taxpayer's United Group to get approval of tax limitation last year."

The proposal calls for the first 26 mills in school property taxes to be repealed in effect, Brotherton said. The money school districts will lose will be made up by an increased amount of state aid, he said.

Under the measure, school districts will be guaranteed to receive no less than the amount generated by 26 mills worth of property taxes. The increased amount of money needed to replace school aid would come from a 1 percent hike in the state sales tax, he said.

"MICHIGAN currently levies the maximum 4 percent sales and use tax permitted by the state constitution," Brotherton said. "The increase would push it to 5 percent. Of course the increased sales tax wouldn't be placed on food or drug items because voters in 1974 took the tax off those items."

"Voters in individual school districts would retain the option of increasing operating millage. But school boards and administrators wouldn't be permitted to seek such increases more than twice in a single year."

Ski club begins

The Farmington Hills Parks and Recreation Department is sponsoring a ski touring club for adults, families, beginners and experts. Club activities include skiing a different park each week, night skiing, special events and trips.

There are no club dues. Registration is \$1 to cover mailing costs.

There will be an organizational meeting from 7-9 p.m., Dec. 12 in the Farmington Hills Library, 32737 West Twelve Mile. For further information call the parks and rec department at 474-6115.

"This portion of the proposal is designed to get at the repeated complaints legislators receive. Even though voters reject school millages, according to the complaints, administrators and boards keep scheduling new elections in the hopes of beating down voter resistance."

Another provision of the property tax reduction amendment would provide an index to assure personal state income tax exemption keeping pace with inflation, Brotherton said. As the rate of inflation increases, so would the amount of personal income tax exemption, he maintained.

"THIS PROVISION attacks what I call the 'creeping tax increases.' They're not approved by anyone, not even the legislature, the governor or the voters," Brotherton said. "They just occur because inflation has reduced the value of the personal income tax deduction. For a family of four, it makes a big difference."

"It has been estimated that if the personal income tax exemption, which was pegged at \$1,500 in 1974 by the legislature, were to reflect the same value in 1979 dollars it would have to be well above \$2,000."

Today, wages, benefits and other factors in our modern economy include built-in cost of living increases to protect employees from the ravages of inflation, Brotherton said. Personal income tax exemption should be no exception, he contended.

Another provision of the proposed constitutional amendment would give senior citizens and renters special deductions so they would share in the lower taxes, Brotherton said.

"It's estimated that when various adjustments are made for the lower property taxes, taxes would effectively be lowered by about \$250 million," Brotherton said. "Adjustments include the elimination of property tax credit in computing an individual's income tax."

"This is a complex proposal. But I believe it's a major step towards relieving the tremendously increasing pressure of property tax. It's no longer true in this nation that the amount of property tax held by an individual is an accurate reflection of economic stature."

"If there's one message Michigan voters have made loud and clear in the last few years of this decade, it's that taxation is getting out of control. With the Headlee amendment and a new drive by Robert Tisch to limit taxes, the subject will dominate political discussions as we go into the 1980s."



Decisions, decisions

Sure enough, picking out that special holiday greeting card can be difficult as is exemplified by Farmington resident Agnes Stevens. But

than making decisions about special persons is what makes the holidays fun. (Staff photo by Randy Borst)

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Perfectly in place: Hathaway's pinned eyelet collar. Yes, the pinned eyelet is back — very fashionably. Hathaway, always an arbiter of good taste, shows it here on a dress shirt of easycare Dacron/cotton, with barrel cuffs and a single pocket. It comes in white, blue or ecru, and the price is a reasonable \$20. And wouldn't today be a perfect time to do some Christmas shopping?

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