Milliken returns salvos

Governor vetoes 'closed' meetings

The Michigan Legislature has no chance to override Gov. William G. Milliken's veto of two bills giving local governmental boards more authority to hold closed meetings.

Milliken last week rejected the amendments to the Open Meetings Act of 1977 as being "an unnecessary step backward."

Both houses of the legislature passed the bills in the closing days of 1980. Because that legislature adjourned, there is no chance for a vote to override the veto, and the bills would have to be reintroduced from scratch.

SB 1143 would have allowed governmental boards to interview candidates for employment and appointment to public office in closed session. It was introduced by Sen. Richard Allen, R-Alma.

Milliken's veto of that measure is a blow to his enemy within the Republican Party, Richard Headlee, Farmington Hills insurance executive and chairman of the Oakland University Board of Trustees. The OU board has been embroiled in a court battle over its interviewing of presidential candidates in closed rooms at an airport hotel.

The bill passed 27-4 in the senate, where it was supported by Oakland County Sens. Donald Bishop, R-Rochester, whose district includes Birmingham and West Bloomfield, Bill S. Huffman, D-Madison Heights, whose district includes part of Troy, and Doug Ross, D-Oak Park, whose district includes Farmington and Southfield.

The house gave it 70-26 support. Voting yes were Reps. Wilbur Brotherton, R-Farmington, James Defebaugh, R-Bloomfield, Richard Fessler, R-Union Lake, Ruth McNamee, R-Birmingham, and Sal Rocca, D-Sterling Heights.

Not voting were Reps. Joe Forbes, D-Oak Park, and Alice Tomboulian, D-Oakland Township.

SB 1296 would have allowed governmental boards to conduct performance reviews of major appointed officials in closed session. Attorney General Frank J. Kelley last year ruled such reviews must be conducted in public.

The bill was sponsored by Sen. David Plawecki, D-Dearborn Heights, one of the original sponsors of the Open Meetings Act.

The senate passed the bill 31-0, with support from the three local Oakland senators.

The house passed it 65-31 with only Rep. Rocca opposed.

The Open Meetings Act allows a public board to review applications behind closed doors when the candidate requests it, but all interviews, discussion and voting must be in open session.

"THESE CHANGES represent an unnecessary step backward from the Open Meetings legislation adopted just four years ago after careful and detailed legislative consideration," said Milliken's veto message.

He apparently referred to the statewide public hearings conducted on the bill in 1976 and the last-minute voting on the 1980 amendments.

"Few decisions made by public bodies are as important as those involving the selection of key administrators or evaluating the performance of those individuals. To bar interested citizens from such discussions isolates from the public view discussions which directly affect the quality and character of government," said Milliken.

"I recognize that it is sometimes difficult for public officials to deliberate questions concerning specific individuals, and some individuals who might be interested in public appointments may be reluctant to have their qualifications considered in open meetings and, therefore, may prefer not to be considered at all," wrote Milliken, who began his political career as a community college trustee.

"It is my judgment, however, that most public bodies and individuals are not unduly inhibited by the requirement that these activities be open to public view. I believe the public good is better served by preserving the policy of openness in government which our citizens have rightfully come to expect."

Deputies have new pact

Oakland County sheriff's employees this week are working under a new contract for the first time since Jan. 1, 1978.

In a binding arbitration decision, Daniel Kruger, professor of labor relations at Michigan State University, decreed terms of a pact that is retroactive to mid-1980 and expires at the end of this year. No ratification vote is needed from either the union or the county board of commissioners.

The announcement was made by the Police Officers Association of Michigan, which has represented the 200 deputies, corrections officers, detention officers, dispatchers and community agents since early 1978, when they voted out the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees.

POAM Executive Director Carl Parsell called the pact "a landmark" because it is the first negotiated with the county administration.

A top seniority deputy will be paid $24,000 a year before overtime — a figure which a POAM spokesman said makes Oakland deputies the second highest paid in the state, behind only Wayne County.

Defense seminar for women

The Society of Women Engineers at Lawrence Institute of Technology will sponsor a seminar on women's self protection at 6 p.m. Thursday in the Science Building auditorium.

A $2 donation is requested.

Greg Durbin of the Southfield Police Department will demonstrate self protection methods. A film will also be shown.

The LIT campus is at 21000 W. Ten Mile Road, near Northwestern highway, in Southfield.

Garden class begins

A series of master gardener classes, taught by the Oakland County Cooperative Extension Service, will begin Feb. 4.

The classes will be held in the Pontiac area on consecutive Wednesdays through April 8. The classes cost $25 and will be limited to 45 students.

Each class will be five hours, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. The topics include growing vegetables and house plants plus lawn care and landscaping.

To request an application, call 1-858-0887 or write Cooperative Extension Service, North Office Building, 1200 N. Telegraph Road, Pontiac 48053.

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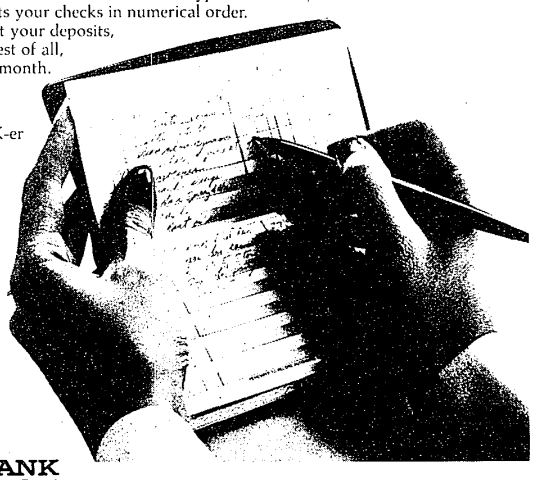

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