

May 19 state tax proposal would cause Legislature to revise school funding

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Q. Under the state aid formula, as assessments go up, school aid goes down. What will happen to state aid under this Proposal A?

A. This formula is being sunsetted (abolished) if this proposal passes. So I can't tell your school district how the school aid formula is going to be affected.

Q. People want their property taxes reduced. But they want more cops, more emergency medical service, more special education. How is the governor going to cut \$250 million and still maintain the local reimbursement? The state has never come through with its promises to reimburse local units for categoricals (local services that are required by state law).

A. I can't disagree on the categoricals. I make no promise today in terms of funding the categoricals.

I am urging the governor — and we had some success this year — to decrease categoricals in general. It's a major policy issue among school districts.

The reason I am urging the school aid formula de-emphasize categoricals is to provide school districts with

greater flexibility in how they spend the dollars.

Clearly, some school districts want the money in categoricals because if the money is there, for transportation or special ed, when they go into (labor) negotiations, they can argue, "Well, we can't use this money for anything other than what the state specifies."

I'm saying it's the school district's responsibility to stand in there and decide how they want to spend the dollars. It's their responsibility.

Clearly, school districts will have a tough time arguing both sides of the issue. One side says, "The state tells us what to do too often." I'm urging the state give them a larger chunk of the money, but then they're responsible for making the decisions.

Now, what is it the people of this state want? I'm not trying to be flip or cynical, but I wish I knew what the people of this state want.

I met with a group of school officials, and they clearly indicated to me it was OK to cut, but don't cut schools.

I met with New Detroit, and they told me, although the governor is a nice guy, many of the cuts he was proposing in social services are unconscionable and that he shouldn't continue.

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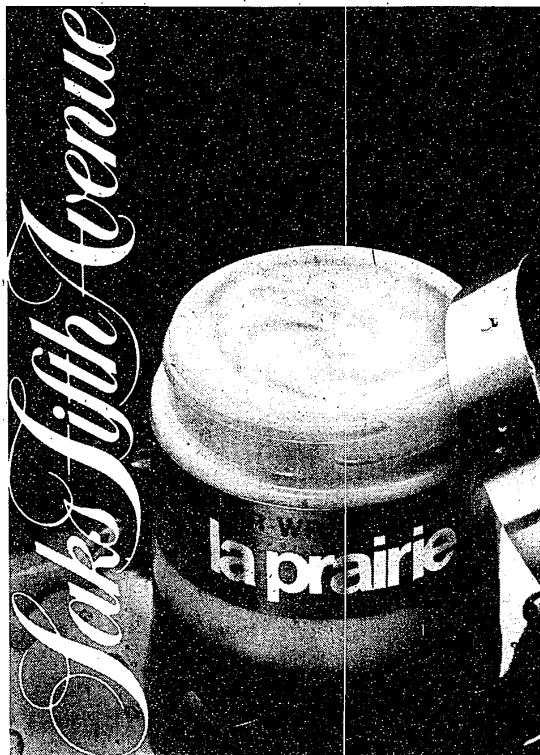
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