

If at first, you don't succeed . . .

After 5 tries, state Senate finally approves tax increase

By Tim Richard
staff writer

State Sen. Dana Wilson, in office barely a month, Tuesday cast one of the biggest votes of his career when he changed his mind and supported a six-month, 1 percent increase in the state income tax.

"No pressure was put on me," said the 33-year-old Democrat from Hazel Park who won a special election recently after serving three terms in the House.

"I just couldn't let my school districts, cities and college district go down the tube.

"I couldn't let the state's bond rating go down. It would never get back.

"I've never been one to push taxes, but these are unusual times and circumstances — a depression. Closing down schools, laying off police and firemen — that would be devastating," said Wilson, whose district will include all of Troy after reappointment.

at about 2:40 p.m. Tuesday after four successive rejections of the measure. Two of those rejections occurred in the two hours of Tuesday morning.

The measure raises the personal income tax rate to 5.6 percent from 4.6 percent for six months, from last April 1 to the end of September. It will pump \$300 million into the state treasury and make up half the \$600 million-plus projected deficit.

Minutes later, the House went through the technicality of concurring, 56-50.

Voting for passage in the Senate were six Republicans and 16 Democrats, according to Sen. R. Robert Geake, R-Northville, who kept a tally.

Area senators who voted yes, besides Wilson, were Majority Leader William Faust, D-Westland, and Doug Ross, D-Southfield.

Area senators opposed were Geake and Donald Bishop, R-Rochester.

In previous votes, the measure never got more than 19 affirmative votes. Geake said the three senators who switched were Thomas Guastello, D-Mt. Clemens; James DeSana, D-Wyandotte; and Wilson.

"I VOTED no, consistently," said Geake, citing mail and calls to his Senate office and home which tallied 322 against and 61 in favor.

"It was not a part of any wheeling and dealing," Geake added. "They (leaders) really had to sweat blood. It was an exhausting period."

A member of the Senate Appropriations Committee, Geake said he put little stock in the list of budget cut proposals unveiled Monday by Gov. Milliken and Budget Director Gerald Miller.

"It was a scare sheet, not a detailed executive order," Geake said of the fiscal year ending Sept. 30.

The Milliken list included cuts totaling \$131 million to K-12 schools, \$74 million to higher education, \$58 million to local governments (cities, townships and counties) and \$41 million to state departments. The cuts would have hit 1,200 mental health workers, 25 state attorneys, 20 Secretary of State branch offices and eight to 12 state parks.

A HALF-HOUR later, the House concurred in what was technically a conference committee report.

A bill may be brought before a

chamber of the Michigan Legislature only citing mail and calls to his Senate office and home which tallied 322 against and 61 in favor.

Actually, said Rep. Sylvia Skrel, R-Livonia, the conference report was identical to the original House bill, passed at 4:30 a.m. Good Friday.

There were no switches in the Observer & Eccentric delegation from the April vote.

Supporting it were Skrel, Joe Forbes, D-Oak Park; Roy Smith, R-Saline; and Ruth McNamee, R-Birmingham.

Opposed were Democrats William Keith of Garden City, John Bennett of Redford and Tom Brown of Westland, and Republicans W.V. Brotherton of Farmington, Jack Kirksey of Livonia, Doug Cruce of Troy, Rick Fessler of Union Lake, Mat Dunaskis of Oxford, James Derefbaugh of Bloomfield Township and L. Jean Willoughby of Bloomfield Hills.

Derefbaugh had been absent for the Good Friday vote. That was the equivalent of voting no because a measure requires 55 votes to pass, regardless of the number of no votes.

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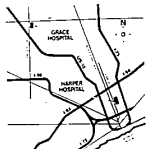
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