

State budget cuts: One vote cost governor \$50 million

By Tim Richard
staff writer

The \$50 million by which Gov. William Milliken last week cut the state budget was the price he paid to get the needed state Senate vote May 11 to pass a state income tax hike.

That price was extracted by Sen. Thomas Guastello, D-St. Clair. The suburban lawmaker switched from a red light (no) to a green (yes) to pass the 1 percent six-month tax surcharge after helping defeat it four times.

"There is a good deal of legitimacy in those cuts," said Guastello, a 40-year-old lawyer who will retire after 14 years in the Legislature to enter his family's commercial building business.

The \$300 million tax hike was supposed to be the final part of the package that had included an earlier \$305 million in budget cuts. But Guastello held out for the additional cuts.

He said there was "not a word" of truth to rumors he switched to win a judicial appointment, get support for his bill to create a fourth district for the Court of Appeals or win an appointment as Sterling Heights city attorney. Guastello was interviewed Saturday on Channel 7's "Spotlight on News."

AND TOUGHER times lie ahead, said Guastello, a member of the powerful appropriations committee, particularly for colleges seeking to build empires.

"I think we could have gotten on without the new University of Michigan hospital. The existing facility, with a little update, could have been a little better without the tremendous improvements there," he said.

"I understand Saginaw Valley (State College) is going to come to the Legislature very shortly looking for a complete intramural building and gym. . . . We've built ice rinks for universities in the Upper Peninsula."

"We're blinding ourselves to a truth that's coming. In a state that finds itself closing elementary schools, you ought to know that in five or 10 years you're going to have to start closing colleges. We just don't have the young people for the numbers of colleges in the state of Michigan."

A PARTICULAR Guastello target will be Wayne County Community College, the only two-year school in the state with no voted property tax millage.

"At the start, we said we'd give it a chance, and they haven't been able to pass a millage. So we're going to give them state support equivalent to a millage. That state support has grown to \$10 million a year," said Guastello, advising it be phased out.

"In the last few years, they have gotten very aggressive. They've put campuses right next, I believe, to some of the community colleges you cover," he said, referring to Oakland Community and Schoolcraft colleges.

A "tragic illustration" of empire building, he said, is that with warehouse space available in Detroit at \$10 a square foot or less, WC3 felt compelled to build warehouse space for \$50 a square foot.

"I FELT like hamburger," Guastello said of the first four Senate votes in which the tax hike was defeated.

The turning point came at 2 a.m. the morning before the fifth vote. Guastello sat in his ground floor State Capitol office with budget director Gerald Miller.

"We divided it into three categories — possible, impossible and maybe. There were some things

How county is hit by new budget cuts

Here is how Gov. Milliken's executive order for \$50 million in state budget cuts will hit institutions in Oakland County, according to reports to state senators.

In most cases, the cut will be made in payments due in the last quarter of the state's fiscal year (July through September). Some school districts, however, are due for no more aid this year and will have to absorb the cut in the first quarter of the next fiscal year.

- Oakland University — \$158,000
- Oakland Community College — \$99,825.
- K-12 school districts — Avondale, \$13,152 (with \$85,000 in aid still to come); Birmingham, \$74,000 (all from categorical next fiscal year); Bloomfield Hills, \$52,681 (all next year); Clarencetown, \$11,475 (\$200,000 still to come); Farmington, \$71,000 (\$18,000 still to come); Rochester, \$51,405 (all next year); Southfield, \$81,000 (all next year); Troy, \$52,000 (all next year); Walled Lake, \$44,000 (nothing more coming); and West Bloomfield, \$30,000 (all next year).
- Oakland County government — \$370,000 from state shared revenue.
- Cities — Birmingham, \$11,783; Bloomfield Hills, \$1,665; Farmington, \$4,524; Farmington Hills, \$18,065; Lathrup Village, \$2,905; Orchard Lake, \$754; Rochester, \$5,537; Southfield, \$49,766; Troy, \$25,563.
- Villages — Beverly Hills, \$3,280; Bingham Farms, \$232; Franklin, \$524.
- Townships — Avon, \$10,281; Bloomfield, \$17,568; Oakland, \$802; Southfield, \$1; West Bloomfield, \$3,436.

Here is the distribution of the \$50 million reduction over the entire state budget:

- Legislature — \$1.2 million.
- K-12 schools — \$8.4 million.
- Four-year colleges — \$5.8 million.
- Community colleges — \$1.5 million.
- Revenue sharing (counties, cities, villages, townships) — \$9.8 million.
- Departments of state government — \$23.5 million.

that were politically impossible," he said, citing the state holiday observance of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday at a cost of \$5 million.

"We're the only state in the union that gives the second-highest-paid state employees a day off that they really don't need. And yet politically it is probably impossible to eliminate it."

"Yet I believe if Dr. King were alive today, he would much rather the money be spent on education and social services. That holiday closes down every bank and courtroom in the state. It's a big ticket item."

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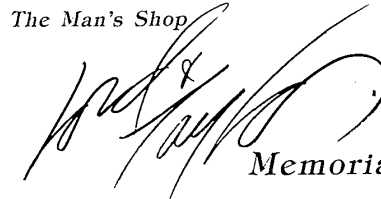
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