

'Christmas tree bill' OK'd; loaded with extras

By Tim Richard
staff writer

Some called it a "Christmas tree bill" with presents for the powerful. Nevertheless, the supplemental appropriations bill for the 1987 state budget passed overwhelmingly in both houses of the Michigan Legislature.

"Sure it was a Christmas tree bill," said Sen. R. Robert Geake, R-Northville, who voted for it. "And I was there to see our district get its share of the ornaments." Geake cited benefits for Redford Township and Schoolcraft College.

"I don't think I've voted for a supplemental in years, except maybe for prison construction," said Rep. W.V. (Sandy) Brotherton, R-Farmington, who voted against it.

"Some real dillies," added Sen. Jack Faxon, D-Farmington Hills, one of the few Democrats to oppose the measure.

OFFICIALLY, IT'S known as the Conference Report on Senate Bill 129. The bill started out at \$35 million in the Senate and grew to \$68 million when the House got hold of it.

When that happens, a bill goes to a joint House-Senate conference committee. The conference committee upped the ante to \$87 million.

That particularly bothered Faxon, because "you can't amend anything in a conference report." The entire package of spending must be voted up or voted down.

The House voted it up 79-25 with six absent. The Senate vote was 24-12 with two absent.

That, too, bothered Faxon, who argued that the Michigan Constitution requires a two-thirds vote (25 senators) for grants to "private" groups. Faxon agreed with the ruling of Lt. Gov. Martha Griffiths, the Senate's presiding officer, that a two-thirds vote was needed, but the Senate membership overturned her ruling.

GEAKE SAID the process is getting better, not worse, because this year there was only a single supplemental bill instead of six or seven.

'In general, I'm opposed to these supplemental bills. They grew from necessities . . . but they kept loadin' it up with all kinds of special junk.'

— Rep. W.V. (Sandy) Brotherton
R-Farmington Hills



'Sure it was a Christmas tree bill. And I was there to see our district get its share of the ornaments.'

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R-Northville



"They grew from necessities like prison construction and matching funds . . . but they kept loadin' it up with all kinds of special junk."

"It's one of the governor's games. He presents us with a so-called 'tight' budget, and we end up with one that requires supplementals."

The bill goes to Gov. Blanchard, who has the constitutional power to veto line items.

THE VOTE of area legislators:

Senate — Yes: Geake, No: Republicans Faxon, Doug Cruce, Troy; and Rudy Nichols of Waterford.

House — Yes: Democrat Maxine Berman, Southfield; and Republicans Mat Dunaskiss, Lake Orion; David Honigman, West Bloomfield; and Judith Miller, Birmingham.

No: Republicans Brotherton; Greg Gruse, Madison Heights; and Gordon Sparks, Troy.

"I was one of six on the conference committee," said Geake, the Senate's senior Republican. "We did have money available, and there were worthwhile projects," he said, specifying:

- \$97,100 for Wayne County to monitor air quality around the General Oil Co., subject of residents' complaints for more than a year. That was inserted into the House version by Rep. John Bennett, D-Redford.

- \$200,000 for tornado warning sirens in Redford Township's fire stations. That was Geake's insertion.

- \$55,100 in additional state aid for Schoolcraft College and \$105,000 for Oakland Community College.

TO THOSE who criticized Rep. Dominic Jacobetti's efforts to win tourism promotion money for the Upper Peninsula, Geake replied, "It's our third largest industry."

"The House tried to insert language to prohibit (drunk driving) check lanes," Geake said, "but the Senate rejected it."

Gov. James J. Blanchard used an executive order to tell state police to set up check lanes. They would usually be operated on weekends late at night where much drunken driving is suspected. Every driver going through a checkpoint is stopped.

Civil libertarians and some House members vehemently oppose check lanes, but so far they have failed to prevent them.

FAXON HAD his own view of the conference committee's efforts: "A small cabal making decisions for the entire Legislature."

He said one senator who succeeded in getting a park grant for his district has developed "a marvelous sense of larceny." Faxon objected to grants for:

- The Ella Sharp Museum in Jackson.
- The Upper Peninsula Gas and Steam Historical Museum.
- The Gerald Ford boyhood home in Grand Rapids.
- The Berrien County sheriff's home historical museum.

• A Monroe Vietnam Veterans memorial.

• A grant for historical copper artifacts in the U.P.

Faxon said Jacobetti, D-Negaunee, chairman of the House Appropriations Committee, used his position on the conference committee to

insert non-amendable items benefiting his district when he failed to win them by the general appropriations process.

"IN GENERAL, I'm opposed to these supplementals," said Brotherton, a six-term House veteran.



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Parks division fetes retirees

Two retiring Oakland County parks and recreation commissioners were honored recently at a recognition banquet at the White Lake Oaks Golf Course.

Cited for service as parks commissioners were Richard Wilcox, Oakland County Board of Commissioners chairman, and Lillian Moffitt, former vice chairman of the Oakland County Board of Commissioners.



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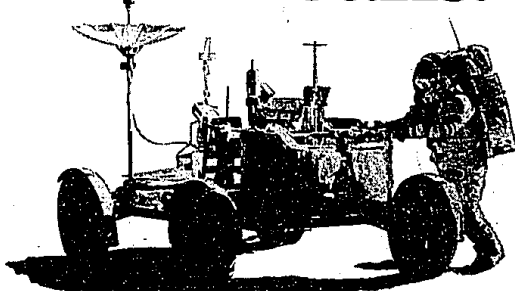
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