

Blanchard, House play 'chicken' on abortion

By Tim Richard
Staff writer

Gov. James Blanchard and the state Legislature are on a collision course over medicare funding of abortions. The question: Which side

will flinch?
"It's unfortunate things have deteriorated to the point where we have to go through this exercise," said

state Rep. W.V. (Sandy) Brotherton, R-Farmington.

Nevertheless, he voted last week for the so-called Dillingham amendment to prohibit off medicare-funded abortions for women on welfare.

BUT REP. LYN BANKS, R-Livonia, says anti-abortion people aren't being given all the facts about what's at stake. Banks voted against the Dillingham amendment.

Senators call for JOA airing

By Teri Banaas
Staff writer

verting makes up just 15 percent of her local paper's advertising revenue, with "mom and pop-type" businesses accounting for the majority, loss of regional advertising could "very well put us in a downward spiral."

TOWAR, The only newspaper publisher to testify last week, was among eight witnesses who appeared before the state Senate Judiciary Committee, which is considering a bill, offered by Kelly, to ask for federal public hearings on the JOA.

Kelly said he planned this week to introduce a resolution that would have the state Legislature request federal hearings on the merger. Approval of the JOA rests with U.S. Attorney General Edwin Meese.

Kelly's proposed legislation originally set up veto powers to be used by the Michigan Attorney General's Office over the JOA. But last week a Wayne State University law professor, Stephen Calkins, dissuaded him from pursuing that course when he testified that would be unconstitutional.

Detroit-area retailer Norman Rosenfeld, owner of the 37-store Sibley shoe chain, said he was concerned that "advertising prices will go up" under a merger. Nothing that 85 percent of his advertising expense is in newspapers, he laid out a

scenario that, starting with excessive advertising costs, could cause his business to stop expanding and "adding jobs to the state of Michigan."

"Competition is great, and we should try and keep it," he said. METROPOLITAN DETROIT Magazine editor Kirk Cheyfitz, another former Free Press employee, echoed Luedtke's comments by calling The Detroit Free Press "the most successful failing newspaper in America."

Under the Newspaper Preservation Act of 1970, two papers cannot merge unless one is shown to be "failing." The dailies have reported that since 1983 they have lost a combined \$63 million.

Luedtke said he doesn't believe that criterion is being met in the Free Press' case, however, pointing to its decisions to add 70 editorial positions in recent years, building a riverfront printing plant in Detroit, opening national and international bureaus "as if it's a thriving, money-making newspaper."

He further criticized both papers for keeping their newsstand prices far below national standards. (The Detroit Free Press sells at 20 cents and The Detroit News at 20 cents.) A simple five-cent hike would equal \$5 million. That's not any small amount of money," he said.

Men backed it 56-36. Women opposed it 11-2.

Here's how local Oakland County state representatives voted:
Yes — Brotherton; Matt Dunaskis; R-Lake Orion; and Gregory Gruse, R-Madison Heights.

No — Maxine Berman, D-Southfield; David Honigman, R-West Bloomfield; Judith Miller, R-Birmingham; and Gordon Sparks, R-Troy.

The only gubernatorial candidate in the Legislature, Rep. Colleen Engler, R-Mount Pleasant, supported it.

SENATE MAJORITY Leader John Engler, R-Mt. Pleasant, said the Senate will go "all the way with it" on Wednesday.

Rep. Fred Dillingham, R-Fowler,

ville, employed a rarely used device to get anti-abortion language into the law.

He sought to amend the Department of Social Services appropriations bill to prohibit payments for "abortions not performed to save the life of the mother."

If Blanchard vetoes the measure, the entire \$1.4 billion medicare budget is lost.

AND THAT'S what concerned Banks.

"I don't want to look a senior citizen or a child in the eye and say I voted to deny this (medicare)," she said.

Banks said calls from 10 or so Right to Life (anti-abortion) constituents revealed they didn't realize the massive ramifications of the Dillingham amendment.

"The Michigan Catholic Conference opposes this amendment. Rep. Mike Griffin (D-Jackson), who normally introduces anti-abortion legislation, also opposes this," she tells them in a reply letter.

BROTHERTON SAID anti-abortion people "have gotten tired of playing the game one way and getting beaten."

In the past, Griffin's anti-abortion language was contained in a special line-item in the DSS budget bill. Governors could — and 13 times did — veto the line item but signed the rest of the bill.

Anti-abortion forces needed a two-thirds vote to override the veto — 74 in the House. The best they ever did was 72.

But with the Dillingham amendment, anti-abortion forces need a simple majority of 56 votes.

"THIS TACTIC was used once before, about 10 years ago," Brotherton recalled. At that time, budget bills were passed just before the fiscal year started.

Now, he said, there is a period of more than three months before the new fiscal year starts.

"There's time for negotiation," he said.

"The governor is in a position to decide if he'll play chicken and see if somebody will back off. He can decide if he'll accept what other states have done and what Congress has done (prohibit use of public funds for abortions)," Brotherton said.

ROYAL OAK Tribune publisher Jeanne Towar testified Thursday about concerns of "predatory practices" by the Detroit papers if the merger is approved.

When asked by Sen. John Kelly, D-Detroit, if she feared practices might "wipe all independents out of business," she responded: "I do see that as a possibility."

Kelly said the combined dailies could offer a Sunday circulation of 1.3 million based on current circulation figures, providing a more attractive market for regional advertisers.

Towar said that while regional ad-

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