## Judges fight counties to keep budget reins

There have been battles in Oak and, Calhoun, Luce, Tuscola and man, Calhoun, Luce, Tuscola and many other countles around the state.

many other countles around the state.

Now state senators are turning their attention to a battle between the judiciary and county boards of commissioners. At stake are court budgets, salary schedules and jobs.

"We need a legislative remedy," pleaded Kerry Karimer, lobbytst for the Calinoun County Board of Committee in Pontiate this word of Committee in Pontiate this word of Commissioners, to the Senate Judicary Committee in Pontiate this word in the Senate Judicary and the system of the Pontiate of Commissioners, and the system of the Pontiate of Pontiate of the Pontiate of Pontiat give court budget powers to local legislative bodies.

THE BILLS would strip circuit, probate and district judges of power to set their own budgets — the number of personnel and how much they're paid. (Wayne County courts, already state funded, would be unaffected.)

County boards and other local bodies which deal with judicial budgets see this as yudicial intrusion into what is essentially a legislative func-

tion. Sald Daniel T. Kildee, a Genesee County commissioner:

"The one area of authority that must stay under the control of the board is that of determining the annual budget. Only the board of commissioners is charged with the responsibility of weighing, against one another, the various services that county government must provide."

And Kammer added facetlously: "Let the fudges levy their own taxes, but the fudges levy their own taxes, but the fudges levy their own taxes, but the their solutions of the viders. I doubt they would want to be that full a partner in government."

"THE REAL losers are the tax-payers," said Senate Judiciary Chairman Alan Cropsey, R-Dewitt. Surveying battles around the state, during one of which Loce County commissioners were sent to fall for refusing to appropriate all that local courts wanted, Cropsey observed, "There is no respect for the court and no respect for the board of commissioners down there."

Doard of commissioners down there."

Oakland circuit judges lined up with the judiciary in a letter from Chief Judge Richard Kuhn to area legislators. Oakland probate judges said they unanimously opposed the bills, branding them "unconstitution-al."

tween the five cities and two town-ships in his jurisdiction — battles in which one township withheld part of its contribution. "It's a ridiculous sit-uation," said Cifelli. "The only solu-tion would be state funding."

nent."

In such circumstances, he said,
idges and their employees would in such circumstances, he said, judges and their employees would have a stake in becoming politically active for commissioners who would support their appropriations.

"Conversely, local politicians could play politics with election of

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jduges unfavorable to them by with-holding adequate funding in pre-election and election years," Wincek sald.

The court administrator also said the Senate bills left room for "un-qualificed" and "uniformed" legisla-tors to eliminate the jobs of "trained management professionals" such as court administrators.

BUT A TUSOLA County commissioner, Dona Rayl, recounted her
board's budget battles with three
judges and said, "County commissioners need control-of the purse
strings. Judges are husy people. Why
do they want to be bothered with
personnel matters and budgets?".
The 10-year veteran of county polities provided her own answer:
"There's an underlying agenda—
the judges' very own wages. They go

after higher wages for their employees to get even with commissioners" and justify higher salaries for themselves, Rayl sain stance where the Tiscola board bargained an 8 percent increase for court staff members. A judge declared it "mill and vold" and gave them 28 and 35 percent increases in two years. Rewest Boomiledt, a lawyer and Judiciary Committee member, was impressed with one of Rayl's arguments: Clerical employees in general county government do much the same work as court clerks, but the court clerks get imperious geometries, seading to much unrest among county work and government of much the same work as court clerks, but the court clerks get among county work and government of the court clerks get among county work and government of the court clerks get among county work and government of the court clerks get among county work and government of the court clerks get among county work and government of the court clerks get among county work and government of the court clerks get among county work and government of the court clerks get among county work and government of the court clerks get among county work and government of the court clerks get among county work and government of the court clerks get among county work and government of the court clerks get among county work and government of the court clerks get among courts work and government of the court clerks get among courts work and government of the court clerks get among courts work and government of the court clerks get among courts work and government of the court clerks get among courts work and government of the court clerks get among courts work and government of the clerks get among courts work and government of the court clerks get among courts work and government of the clerks get among courts work and government of the clerks get among courts work and government of the clerks get among courts work and government of the clerks get among courts work and government of the clerks get among courts work and government of the clerks get a

CROPSEY SAID the bills, spon-sored by Sen. Harry DeMaso, R-Bat-tle Creek, are being used mainly as a

discussion point and are unlikely to pass in their present form.

Monday's Ponliac hearing was the fourth he has held, and arguments everywhere were much the same.

Cropsey and Fessler saw one large problem rising if the state takes over all court funding and sets all salaries for all court employees in Michigan. The scenario runs like this.

Wage rates in the metropolitan Dottroit area tend to be 20 percent above the rest of the state. It's more likely that outstate wages would be increased 20 percent than metropolitan wages cut. If court employees outstate get big raises, other county employees will want similar wage increases. That would—put enormous pressure on county boards to hike wages and property taxes at a time when revenue sharing is being cut.



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