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Oakland issue: paying for a district court

Oakland County officials are puz-ziling over how to pay for district courts. Many see the present system as haphazard and unfair.

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Commissioner Robert Page, R-Birmingham, as the board's general
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The immediate question is, who should pay for operating the \$5ad District Court? At present, county government is the so-called "control unit."

But commissioners in Birming-ham, Southfield and Farmington, for example, argue, "Our residents are paying for courts twice — once for our county taxes for the \$2ad District Court."

Such an arrangement has virtually no defenders.

HERE IS the history:

The 1985 Michigan Constitution required professional local courts of the peace courts. The Legislature replaced them with a system of district courts.

These district courts bad to get their budgets and frequently their offices from "control units." Some innes those districts and control units are a single city or township—the 44th District Court.

All was the judges of sile served out, and what was considered couts, and what was considered courts, and what to the library to the second of the second and the second of the second as courts and thus paying found themselves forced to pay increase the library force of their revenues to library force of the presence that the second of the second

District, solely of Waterford Town-ship.
In other cases the district consists of two or three closely-related gov-cruments — the 47th District Cour-covers the cities of Farmington and Farmington Hills; the 46th, South-field, Lathrup Village and Southfield Township.

BUT OTHER areas — mostly ru-ral townships back in the '60s — had little lo start with, so the Legislature lumped them into the \$250 District and assigned Oakland County as the control unit. In 1988 it has become a bone of contention. The \$230 District Court consists of four divisions: 1st — cities of Novi, South Lyon, Walted Lake and Wixom; and seven townships.

townships, 2nd — five northwestern town-

2nd — five northwestern town-ships.
3rd — cities of Rochester, Roches-ter Hills, Auburn Hills and Lake An-gelus. (Significantly, Rochester Hills and Auburn Hills were both town-ships until the last five years.)

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analysis

4th — cities of Clawson and Troy.

"THE CITIES of Hazel Park and Madison Heights want state fund-ing," said Commissioner Ruel McPherson, D-Hazel Park. "They don't care where it (funding) comes from."

from."

But county officials in Oakland and many outstate counties are adamantly opposed to state funding of courts, for a variety of reasons.

"It would do nothing to speed up trials," said Oakland Cierk Lynn Allen.

trials," said Oakunu Greek Symbol len.

"They (the staic) would take over the good part. We'd have to return the fees, the Friend of the Court fees and filing fees. They would pick up the salaries, and we'd pick up the costs of facilities like buildings, heat and light. It would be a real money loser" for the county, the clerk said,

OTHER COUNTY officials see an even more dangerous cannel's nose under the tent with full state funding. Their reasoning, as compiled for the compiled seems of the compiled seem

cut to Wexford levels.

Next, court personnel in (say)
Wexford would have to be paid the
same as in Wayne, but it doesn't stop
there. In the Wexfords, the court
clerk has lunch with the drain commissioner's clerk and the road com-

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