

GOP has best luck in passing laws

By Tim Richard
staff writer

Suburban Republicans had better luck getting laws passed by the Michigan Legislature than Democrats during the last two years.

And that's with Democrat James J. Blanchard sitting in the governor's chair and deciding what bills will be signed into law.

The numbers were culled from a report called "Status of Legislation" dated July 1. It lists all bills introduced by all legislators.

IN THE Observer & Eccentric circulation area:

• Five Democratic state representatives introduced 98 bills and saw 12 become law — a batting average of 12.4 percent.

• Eight Republican representatives penned 97 bills and saw 15 passed — a batting average of 15.5 percent. The number is significant because Democrats have 57-53 control of the House, and the majority party typically doesn't let minority members win many big ones.

• Three Democratic senators introduced a total of 72 bills and saw four enacted — a batting average of 5.6 percent.

• Four Republican senators dropped 124 bills in the hopper and saw 30 enacted — 24.2 percent. Republicans have a 20-18 edge in the upper chamber.

THE NUMBERS can't be taken at face value for many reasons.

Minor measures — called "dog and cat bills" by cynics — ought not to be given the same weight as major measures, like the statewide branch banking law of Rep. William Keith, D-Garden City.

An effective lawmaker may introduce few measures but have a significant impact on others' bills through the amendment process.

While Sen. R. Robert Geake, R-Northville, saw only one of his 15 bills become law, many senators would steal to get Geake's committee assignment — Appropriations, and the chairmanship of the social services subcommittee.

And sometimes lawmakers on both sides of the capitol rounds introduce the same measure, but only one version is enacted. Thus, Rep. Justine Barnes, D-Westland, introduced anti-smoking bills, but the Legislature moved the versions submitted by Sen. Jack Faxon, D-Farmington Hills.

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Rep. Colleen Engler, R-Mt. Pleasant, is making a bid for governor, impressing many political watchers and is likely to wind up on the state GOP ticket for another post. But she's battling 0-for-6 when it comes to getting bills passed.

HERE ARE representatives' records — or luck, if you prefer — in getting legislation passed:

Lyn Barker, R-Livonia — one bill passed, on child day-care parental visits, of five introduced. She is a freshman.

Justine Barnes, D-Westland — zero of 16. A second-term, she offered many health measures.

John Bennett, D-Redford — three of 20. His laws cover home-improvement financing, business referees and county treasurer investments. He's in his 11th term.

Maxine Berman, D-Southfield — three of 20, covering university gifts, breast cancer consent procedures and park commissions. Her major effort — four tenant protection bills — has yet to bear fruit. She's in her second term.

W.V. Brotherton, R-Farmington — two enacted of 15 offered. His laws cover health care investigations and residential construction regulations. He's in his sixth term.

Mat Dunaskis, R-Lake Orion — one out of 10, covering driver license suspensions. He's a third-term.

Gregory Gruse, R-Madison Heights — one out of 13, covering liquor licensing. He's a freshman.

David Honigman, R-West Bloomfield — four out of 21, the greatest number of successes of any area Republican. A freshman, Honigman won passage of laws covering worker compensation assessment notices, township public improvement procedures, forbidding training in the use of explosives and reporting of AIDS cases.

William Keith, D-Garden City — three out of 22, including a landmark banking code, restoring immunity

from liability for certain governmental employees and hiking examination fees for savings and loans. He's in his seventh term.

James Kosteva, D-Canton — four of 18, best record of any Democrat. Also a freshman, Kosteva had bills enacted covering tax credits, school aid, hunting rules and waterfront registration.

Gerald Law, R-Plymouth — three of 21, covering civil liability, prisons and health maintenance organizations. He's in his second term.

Judith Miller, R-Birmingham — one of four, providing retirement benefits for former governors. Her best-known bill, to make the honeybee the state insect, received much debate but has yet to be enacted. She's in her first term.

Gordon Sparks, R-Troy — two of seven, covering driver license suspensions and city planning commissions. He's in his second term.

AREA SENATORS achieved these success records:

Doug Cruce, R-Troy — 10 of 39, mainly in the area of business regulation.

William Faust, D-Westland — zero of 21.

Jack Faxon, D-Farmington Hills — one of 37, the law banning smoking in public buildings.

Richard Fessler, R-West Bloomfield — four of 35, covering condemnation procedures, handicapped license plates, a land conveyance to a conservation club and a major bill establishing training for asbestos workers.

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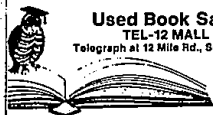
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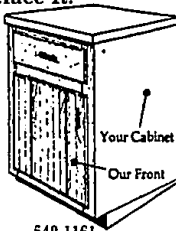


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