

# Michigan lawmakers rated as spenders

By Richard G. Thomas  
special writer

**I**N THE U.S. Senate, William Proxmire, D-Wis., had the most tightfisted voting record in 1988. In the U.S. House, Republican Philip Crane of Illinois led in austerity voting during the legislative year, according to a survey by Roll Call Report Syndicate.

On the other side of the ledger, Ben Lawton Chiles, D-Fla., was the senator voting most often to raise spending on roll calls that presented a clear choice between higher or lower outlays. Rep. Charles Wilson, D-Texas, was the House member whose voting showed least concern about the annual deficit.

The newspaper syndicate's second annual Spending Index, a study of nearly 100 key roll calls conducted in 1988, shows how often lawmakers

## Roll Call Report

cast austerity votes to back up their political boasting on the deficit issue. It is the only national study of its kind by a news organization.

**THE SURVEY** found the average senator voting for austerity on only 19 percent of the year's roll calls posing a choice of more or less spending in 22 roll calls. Michigan's Carl Levin scored 14 percent, and Donald Riegle 18 percent. Both are Democrats.

The average House member supported the less-spending alternative only 22 percent of the time in 76 roll calls. The higher the score, the more austere the record.

Carl Pursell, R-Plymouth, scored 33 percent, second highest among Michigan's 18 representatives. William Broomfield, D-Birmingham, scored 12, second-lowest among Michiganans.

Among Democrats, Dennis Hertel of Harper Woods and William Ford of Taylor scored 17; and Sander Levin of Southfield, 15.

Lowest-ranked Michigan member was Rep. John Dingell of Trenton, 9. Most austere was Paul Henry, R-Grand Rapids. Detroit congressman John Conyers and George Crockett rated 20 and 16, respectively, higher than suburban Democrats.

The Spending Index covered nearly all votes in the House and Senate chambers offering a choice between more or less spending, regardless of the amount of money at stake.

It tracked years and says on efforts to establish or eliminate programs, create new agencies and commissions or dismantle existing units of government, hike or trim entitlement benefits, curb increases, increase outlays and inflict direct spending cuts.

**THE SURVEY** excluded several roll calls on highly charged issues such as Contra aid and abortion, where policy considerations overwhelmed fiscal concerns.

The less-spending alternative prevailed on only 12 percent of those 98 roll calls.

Proxmire, who voted the austerity position 68 percent of the time, was followed by Sens. Gordon Humphrey, R-N.H., who scored 55 percent, and Jesse Helms, R-N.C., 41 percent.

Chiles registered zero percent, and ranking just above him were Sens. Pete Domenici, R-N.M., and Albert Gore, D-Tenn., each with pro-austerity scores of 5 percent.

**CRANE SCORED** 59 percent. Ranking immediately behind him were GOP Reps. Bob Stump of Arizona with 57 percent, Norman Shum-

way of California with 55 percent, William Dannemeyer of California with 51 percent and James Sensenbrenner of Wisconsin with 50 percent. No other House member voted pro-austerity at least half the time.

Wilson recorded the lowest House score by supporting the less-spending alternative less than 1 percent of

the time. He was followed by Democratic Reps. Sam Stratton of New York and Dan Mica of Florida, each with 4 percent. Ronald Coleman of Texas with 5 percent and Kika de la Garza of Texas with 7 percent.

The Spending Index weighs all votes equally and is non-partisan and is non-ideological.

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## State to give computer a \$22 million upgrading

(AP) — A \$22 million plan to upgrade a faulty, costly computer system used to distribute unemployment benefits to about 79,000 jobless Michigan residents a week has been detailed by state officials.

The Department of Labor is in the process of revamping the computer system begun in 1979 for the Michigan Employment Security Commission.

It was estimated to cost the state about \$17 million. Instead it cost about \$71 million and was plagued by breakdowns, delays and mistakes.

The corrections are expected to add \$22 million to the bill.

"We are proposing to correct major problems in the system," said Kay Penner, chief of staff for the department.

**THE COST** will not be borne by Michigan employers.

"There's not a dime of state general fund tax money in that system," Penner said.

Penner said the current eight regional computers across Michigan will be replaced by a single central processing unit to speed up claims and make sure benefits are accurate.

James Dye, director of the Labor Department's bureau of data pro-

cessing, said the new system also will hasten communications and provide more storage capacity.

He said the federal Department of Labor has been asked for a \$2.2 million grant to help in the improvements.

He said the new system should be able to handle a claims load four times greater than today, perform through 1997, work 98 percent of the time and provide a response time of no more than 5 seconds.

There will be a backup power source and redundant mechanical parts to protect against the loss of data and other failures, he said.

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