

House Dems reject GOP's 'reform' rules

Here's how House members were recorded on major roll call votes in the opening week of the 101st Congress. There were no Senate roll calls.

Roll Call Report

REFORM RULES — By a vote of 231 for and 162 against, the House endorsed the Democratic majority's proposed rules for its operation in the 101st Congress.

The vote cleared the way for routine adoption of the Democratic rules, which are essentially unchanged from those used in the 100th Congress. It rebuffed a reform package authored by House Republicans. At issue were GOP complaints that Democrats in recent Congresses have used their control over com-

mittee and floor operations to all but eliminate Republican opposition. Republicans say increasingly restrictive rules also lessen accountability to constituents and make it more difficult for public opinion to influence Congress.

The GOP rules sought to:

- Require roll call votes on final passage of all appropriations and taxation bills and members' pay raises.
- Substitute a five-day work week for the present three-day week.

- Outlaw proxy voting in committees.
- Require committees to be more open in conducting meetings and divulging voting records.

Republicans also attacked the increasing use of "closed" rules that limit or prohibit floor amendments, the Democratic majority's growing reliance on budget cut waivers to skirt statutory deficit limits and the practice of adding unauthorized money and programs to appropriations bills.

Also, the GOP rules required the House to include itself in civil rights, fair labor practices and other social legislation it has passed for the rest of the country and directed the Rules Committee to recommend ways of streamlining the House's committee bureaucracy.

Minority Leader Bob Michel, R-Ill., said the GOP rules would "blow the doors off the chamber and let in the clean, fresh air of open and free debate."

Democrats did not comment on the Republican proposal.

Members voting yes supported House rules put forth by the Democratic majority. Voting yes: Democrats Dennis Hertel of Harper Woods, William Ford of Taylor and Sander Levin of Southfield.

Voting no: Republicans Carl Pursell of Plymouth and William Broomfield of Lake Orion.

CLOSED RULES — By a vote of 163 for and 239 against, the House rebuffed a Republican attack on the Democratic majority's increasing use of closed debating rules.

Democratic legislation. This vote killed a GOP attempt to require four days' notice of any Rules Committee meeting that could send bills to the floor under restrictive rules.

"This House is becoming unrepresentative and undemocratic," said Rep. Gerald Solomon, R-N.Y. Democrats did not comment on the proposal.

Members voting yes favored four days' notice of Rules Committee meetings that could produce closed rules for floor debate.

Voting yes: Republicans Pursell and Broomfield. Voting no: Democrats Hertel, Ford and Levin.

GOP school aid plan: Divert more state spending

(AP) — Just weeks after the Michigan Legislature killed a school finance plan, Senate Republican leaders have drafted a new proposal. They say it will boost state financing of public schools by more than \$500 million a year.

But it, too, faces a long road. Organizers must gather enough petition signatures and win either acceptance by the Legislature or approval by state voters.

The proposal doesn't call for a tax increase, but would set aside a larger share of the state budget for schools, according to Sen. Dan DeGrow, R-Port Huron.

"This is a concept we've argued

for from day one," DeGrow said.

"This is re-establishing priorities," he said. Backers will discuss the idea with education, business and other groups and decide near the end of January whether to launch a petition drive to place it on the ballot.

THE PROPOSAL is aimed at reducing the gap between rich and poor school districts in Michigan. Currently, the poorest districts spend less than \$2,500 per pupil a year. The richer ones — such as Bloomfield Hills, Birmingham, Southfield, Farmington and Livonia — allocate \$5,000 to \$7,000 per pupil per year.

Senate GOP leaders said they would draft such a proposal after the Legislature failed last month to approve legislation to cut property taxes for homeowners and businesses, raise the sales tax to 5 percent from 4 percent, and dedicate 10.7 percent of the budget for education.

DeGrow said many school officials are supporting the new idea, but he acknowledged that it's expected to draw opposition from many lawmakers who want to protect other areas of the budget.

"House Democrats are not real keen on this," he said.

THE PROPOSAL, he said, calls for earmarking 11 percent of the state budget for education in 1991. Each year for five years, it would be raised by 1 percent year to a total of 15 percent. Now, 7.4 percent of the budget goes for schools.

The budget for the current fiscal year calls for spending \$6.7 billion from the general fund, the state's main checking account.

Three percent of the budget would be set aside for community colleges, and the state would guarantee at least \$3,000 per year for each school pupil, DeGrow said.

He said the program would be funded by growth in the state budget, as long as spending for other programs is frozen. But he said an extra \$230 million would be needed in the first year of the plan.

If lawmakers decide to go ahead, they would start circulating petitions in April, DeGrow said.

They would have to collect 191,726 valid signatures within six months to force a special election, although the Legislature would have an opportunity to pass the law itself before the election is held.

Also backing the new plan is Sen-

ate Majority Leader John Engler, R-Mount Pleasant.

BUT THE CHAIRMAN of the Senate Appropriations Committee is cool to the idea.

The *Booth Newspapers* reported that Sen. Harry Gast, R-S.L. Joseph, said the budgets of at least four state departments would have to be wiped out to meet the proposed school spending increases.

"I'm not happy about it," Gast said. "I think they should define where these dollars are going to come from."

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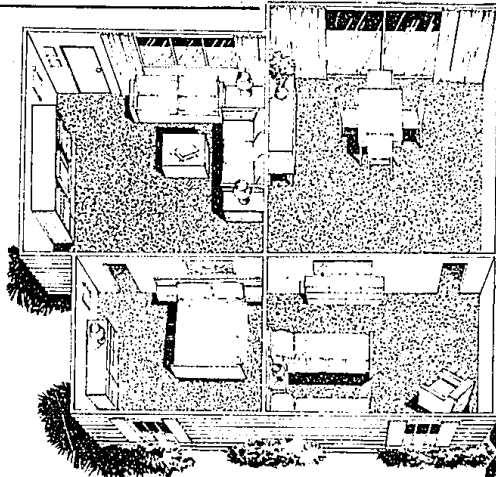
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