

Just in case

Petitions still going as Senate OKs unclaimed bottle bill

By Tim Richard
Staff writer

That petition drive over unclaimed can and bottle deposits is still on — "just to keep a safety net in case the legislation collapses."

That was the word from Michigan United Conservation Clubs spokesman Don Stypula as the state Senate Wednesday gave final approval to a bill saying unclaimed deposits belong to the people and will be used for environmental cleanups.

The Senate vote was 37-1, with all Observer & Eccentric area senators voting yes.

"The Senate leadership put it on

second reading, bypassing the committee. That is very unusual," said Stypula.

The Senate held up the bill until a House committee acted on a companion bill to create a trust fund for the money. The bills are tie-barred, meaning one can't become law unless both do.

MUCC REVERSED its earlier opposition to the unclaimed deposits measure, House Bill 4704, after it was amended to the environmental group's satisfaction.

The formula was changed to put 75 percent into environmental

cleanup programs and give 25 percent to the retailers," Stypula said.

Currently, wholesalers keep the deposit money on beer, wine cooler and pop cans and bottles that aren't returned. Estimates of the total take vary from \$20 million (industry claim) to \$35 million (MUCC's estimate).

An earlier version of HB 4704 would have split the money between toxic cleanups (60 percent), alcoholism programs (15 percent) and retailers (25 percent). The measure got 71 votes, 12 short of the three-fourths needed to amend a voter-approved law

THE REVISED BILL last week sailed through the House on a 100-6 vote.

All Observer & Eccentric area lawmakers supported it except Rep. Mat Dunaskas, R-Lake Orion, who missed the vote.

The Michigan Interfaith Council on Alcohol Problems favored the MUCC version. Said newsletter editor Alan B. Rice II:

"Backers of the (original) HB 4704 say they don't understand why we are not in favor of their bill, since it not only provides money for environmental cleanup, it would give about

\$4.5 million a year for alcohol and drug programs.

"It's really very simple. The MUCC petition drive is in complete harmony with the original purpose of the (1978) bottle bill, namely to clean up the environment from carelessly tossed beverage cans and bottles."

"The substance abuse amendment really has very little to do with alcohol and drug programs. Its purpose (was) to pick up votes from those who support substance abuse services in the hope of nullifying the MUCC petition drive."

THE MUCC office is handling work on a multi-group petition drive to put its own unclaimed deposit bill on the 1990 ballot.

Stypula said Rice's organization this week contributed 500 signatures to the petition drive. Already more than 22,000 signatures have been collected in its quest to get the required 192,000 signatures for the "just in case" ballot proposal.

He said petition forms are available by sending a stamped, self-addressed envelope to: Committee to Keep Michigan Clean, PO Box 30235, Lansing 48909.

County gets back road patrol funds

Oakland County recently received \$3.3 million from the state of Michigan, with another \$1.2 million yet to be paid.

The Michigan Supreme Court awarded Oakland County the money after ruling in mid-March that the state of Michigan improperly withheld secondary road patrol money from the Act 416 grant, said Linda Wasielewski, first assistant corpora-

tion counsel for Oakland County.

"The court ruled that the act only requires that the county expenditures and the number of deputies not drop below the 1978 level when the act was first passed," Wasielewski said.

The \$1.2 million is the interest owed to Oakland County on the withheld monies. It will be paid on a per

dium basis, with the county receiving \$1,487 per day until the balance of the \$1.2 million is paid off.

"THESE FUNDS will assist the (county) board and Sheriff John Nichols in helping the roadways safe for Oakland County travelers," said Oakland County Board of Commissioners chairman Roy Rowell.

"This is a true example of justice prevailing. We always believed Oakland County was in the right and we took our case to the Supreme Court and won," said Oakland County Executive Daniel T. Murphy.

The case began in 1983 when the State Criminal Justice Institute said Oakland County was violating the act because it was collecting money for road patrol from contracts it had with townships, Wasielewski explained.

Oakland County disagreed.

"We took that case to the Michi-

gan Court of Claims and we won. Then the State appealed to the Michigan Court of Appeals and the decision was reversed," Oakland County Executive Daniel T. Murphy said.

"But we kept on going to the Michigan State Supreme Court where the Court of Appeals decision was reversed."

"We maintained that the county and its interpretation of Act 416 was correct all along. We are happy that we persevered and that the court agreed with us," Murphy added.

Traffic tie up alert issued

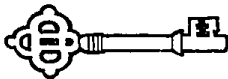
The Oakland County Road Commission is issuing a traffic tie-up alert for M-59 between East Boulevard and I-75 in the cities of Pontiac and Auburn Hills.

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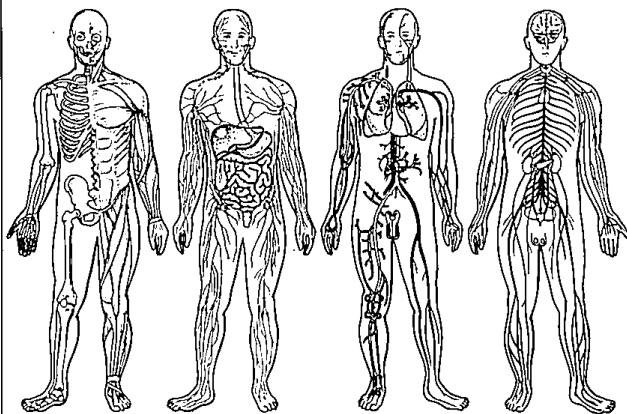
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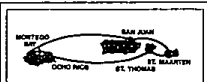
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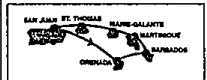
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