

GOP wants tax cut for utility tax

By Tim Richard
Staff writer

State Senate Republicans want property tax relief for both business and homeowners as the price for reinstatement of Detroit's utility tax.

"It's not a Republican or Democratic, Engler or Blanchard approach," said Senate majority leader John Engler, R-Mount Pleasant, in describing the three-bill, \$125 million package the upper chamber advanced last week.

"The House action (\$344 million in property tax cuts for homeowners voted in March) that would have resulted in a \$400 million increase on employers was bad economics. It's not the way to go," the GOP's gubernatorial hopeful told the chamber.

"We didn't set one class of the population against another. We didn't set one part of the state against another."

SENATE DEMOCRATS, joined by Republican Richard Fessler of Union Lake, failed again Thursday to force out of committee a bill to reinstate Detroit's 5 percent utility tax.

The city faces a Wednesday deadline for getting permissive legislation or Wayne Circuit Judge Marvin Stempfen could order its collection to cease. The tax is worth nearly \$60

million in future annual revenue and \$100 million in past revenue from mid-1989 to early 1990. The House of Representatives has already passed the bill.

Republicans held a 19-17 line against forcing the bill out of the Finance Committee for the second straight week. Their message: No utility tax action until House Democrats act on GOP property and inheritance tax proposals.

The Michigan Legislature is in a two-week Easter recess. Negotiations between party leaders in the two chambers reportedly broke down Thursday.

STATE TREASURER Robert Bowman called a part of the Senate GOP package as "our" and "the governor's" bill in a brief interview.

He referred to Senate Bill 895, sponsored by Fessler, which would give income tax credits for property taxes in excess of the rate of inflation. The state treasury would pay \$85 million in such relief to local units of government.

The Senate last week expanded the program from both Blanchard's and Fessler's original proposals to include:

- All property — not just home- steads.
- All property taxes — not just school operating.
- A single business tax cut of \$35

million for firms whose property tax increases exceeded the consumer price inflation rate.

THE SENATE rejected, on an unrecorded vote, an amendment by Jack Faxon, D-Farmington Hills, to grant greater relief to persons with Alzheimer's and Parkinson's disease. "The appropriations bill was here last week," said Fessler, saying that that bill was the proper vehicle to accomplish Faxon's goal.

The property tax relief bills aren't true cuts, Engler said.

"This doesn't cut anybody's taxes. This limits the increase," he said. If the bills become law, their effect would be to take \$125 million from the state general fund, pay it to local units (particularly schools) and reduce pressure on property taxes.

Both parties admitted it left unanswered the question of what in the \$7.6 billion state budget will be cut to pay for the property tax relief.

Girl Scouts seeking alumnae

The Girl Scout Council of Northern Oakland County is forming a Girl Scout Alumnae Group for women who at one time in their lives participated in scouting, either as a scout, parent or leader. Their objective is to promote Girl Scout activities, explained Win

Moffatt, spokesman for the council. The fledgling group hopes to have an organizational meeting next month, Moffatt said, although the date and location hasn't been confirmed. Additional information can be obtained by calling Moffatt at 651-6541 or 651-0084.

Livonia program on Irish art

The Book of Kells, an 8th Century masterpiece of Irish art, will be discussed 8 p.m. Thursday, April 12 at the Livonia Civic Center Library, 32777 Five Mile.

Bernard Meehan, keeper of manuscripts at Trinity College, Dublin, will deliver an illustrated talk on the

ancient manuscript. Meehan is on an 18-city American tour sponsored by the Irish American Cultural Institute. His area appearance is sponsored by the Institute's metro Detroit chapter.

Admission is \$5. More information is available by calling 535-7425.

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