

Growth communities aid increase plan falters

By Tim Richard
staff writer

A bill to guarantee growth communities a bigger slice of state aid ran into a snag in the state Senate — opposition from the Michigan Municipal League.

"The question is, who's gonna pay for it?" MML lobbyist William Davis told the Senate Local Government Committee last week.

Davis sees other cities, villages and townships suffering if more state aid is automatically funneled to growth communities that take a special mid-decade census and find the population up 15 percent or more.

Committee chair Harmon Cropsey, R-Decatur, postponed a vote on the measure.

AN AIDE to the sponsor, Sen. R. Robert Geake, R-Northville, said Davis had it wrong — no one would lose state aid. The increases to growth areas could be funded by the normal 5 percent growth in state revenue.

At present, communities that take a special census and find growth are entitled to aid increases. But they must fight for them in the supplemental appropriations process. In 1987 Gov. James J. Blanchard vetoed that bill. The Geake bill would guarantee more aid based on a mid-decade census.

"Not until 1988 were any supplemental appropriations made," Geake's aide said.

If enacted, the bill would have no effect until after special censuses are taken in the mid-1990s.

"Now is the time to do this bill," said Gene Thornton, lobbyist for the Michigan Townships Association, "because we don't know what the gaining cities and townships will be until 1995." Thornton put the current cost of additional aid to growth areas at \$3.5 million.

GEAKE INTRODUCED Senate Bill 520 at the request of Northville Township, whose clerk, Dick Henningsen, supported it in written testimony.

He said the special census helped his township "to forecast with a greater degree of accuracy our ex-

penditures during the development of the community's five-year business plan."

But the "inconsistencies" of the legislative process are making it difficult to project revenue, he said.

Some 38 cities, villages and townships took special censuses in the 1980s, Geake's staff reported, with Oakland and western counties the big gainers.

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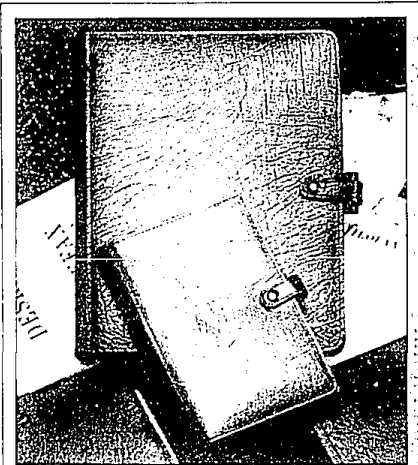
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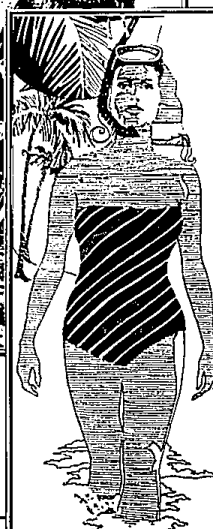

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