

Area school officials fight 'Robin Hood effect'

By Ryan Tulak
staff writer

Oakland County school districts will lose several million dollars if state legislators pass a House bill to spread aid more evenly across all school districts, area school superintendents say.

The bill, approved 56-29 last week by the state House of Representatives, would transfer \$650 million in the school aid fund from wealthy to poorer districts by cutting aid for 14

of 29 programs which area schools offer.

"We are clearly not in favor of this Robin Hood effect," said Farmington Schools Superintendent Michael Flanagan, noting his district would lose \$4 million if the bill becomes law.

"We believe in equity. But not by taking it from us."

The state Senate Tuesday voted 30-4 against the bill, which three members of each chamber will discuss in a conference committee in

early June.

Jim Fordell, aide to bill sponsor Rep. William Keith, D-Garden City, said most Oakland County school districts would receive 8-9 percent state funding increases under the bill.

BUT RICHARD SIMONSON, assistant superintendent for Oakland Intermediate Schools, said the funding boost is deceptive because it glosses over costs each school would have to shoulder for programs the bill proposes to cut. Oakland County

school districts otherwise would continue to receive state aid for several more programs.

"The state is willing to give handouts to poorer districts by having the taxpayers in districts willing to pay taxes pick up the tab," Simonson said.

The state serves Oakland County school districts slices of \$600 million in "categorical" aid for the 14 programs like foreign pupil impact and gifted and talented students and \$50 million in Social Security and pensions.

The bill effectively would cut the programs and retirement aid, unless each school district finances them independently.

School districts with less than 500 students, mostly in the Upper Peninsula, will have no programs cut, Fordell said.

Several county school superintendents have opposed the bill, many urging the state to aid poorer school districts with other funds.

BIRMINGHAM SCHOOLS Superintendent Roger Garvelink said he was "extremely concerned" about the bill, adding it could cost his district \$5 million in state aid if enacted.

Bloomfield Hills schools could lose \$4.5 million in retirement aid and \$500,000 in categorical aid under the bill, said Dan White, assistant superintendent for business, who fears its passage.

"I really think it's closer to reality than it ever has been," White said. Troy schools could lose an esti-

mated \$3.4 million in categorical aid, that district's business director Marjane Zedner said.

Southfield, Walled Lake and West Bloomfield schools each stand to lose more than \$1 million in state aid, superintendents there said.

Oakland County House representatives who voted against the bill are Maxine Berman, D-Southfield; Jan Dolan, R-Farmington Hills; David Hoenigman, R-West Bloomfield; Judy Miller, R-Birmingham. Gordon Sparks, R-Troy, did not vote.

Reporters Sharon Dargay, Brenda Dooley, Brian Lysaght, James Radebaugh, and Tim Smith contributed to this story.

Broomfield dines with Bush, Gorbys

U.S. Rep. William Broomfield, R-Birmingham, the ranking Republican on the House Foreign Affairs Committee, will join President George Bush and Soviet leader Michael Gorbachev at a state dinner at the White House tonight.

The dinner is being held in conjunction with the May 30 to June 3 summit meeting between Bush and Gorbachev.

"The summit comes at a critical

point in Soviet and world affairs as we deal with the dramatic changes that ushered in this decade, particularly the startling transformation of Europe," Broomfield observed.

"I am extremely honored that the president invited me to attend this state dinner, which will allow me to be an observer in this historic process."

Broomfield and Florida Democratic Rep. Dante Fascell, chairman

of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, met with Gorbachev in a half-day private session in Moscow three years ago.

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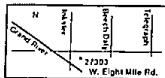
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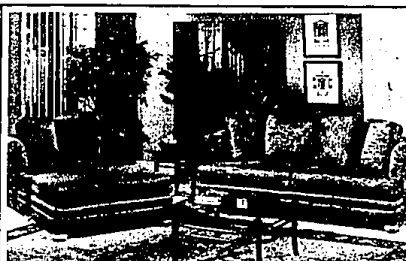
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