

# Dems lose battle over teensy tax cut

By Pat Murphy  
staff writer

Oakland Democrats would like to make a political mountain out of a financial molehill.

Hours after the Republican-controlled Board of County Commissioners reduced the county's share of property taxes, Democrats were drafting at least two press releases saying the cut wasn't enough.

"It's a matter of principle," said Lawrence R. Pernick, D-Southfield, who is chairman of the Democratic caucus.

The amount of money involved may be small, he said, but Republicans are the ones always talking about cutting taxes.

"Yet when we (Democrats) want to cut taxes, they won't go along," said Pernick.

Republicans, however, dismissed the criticism as election-year politics. "They're always saying we didn't cut taxes enough," said commissioner Roy Rewold, chairman of the board. "We did great to cut taxes at all... not many places could do that."

DURING THE regular meeting of the Oakland County Board Thursday, commissioners voted to cut the county millage by .0871 mills per \$1,000 assessed valuation.

Instead of paying \$231.98 in county property taxes as he or she did in 1990, the owner of a \$100,000 house will pay about \$228.80 next year, or about \$3.36 less.

The cut was mandated by the Headlee Amendment that requires the millage rate to go down when the tax base gets larger.

With Oakland's state equalized valuation increasing to \$25.8 billion in 1990 — up from \$23.4 billion the previous year — the Headlee Amendment required the county's tax rate to be cut accordingly.

The county's portion of the property tax bill is usually about 10 percent of the total. School and municipal taxes are usually much higher, generally around 60 and 16 percent respectively.

So even Republicans don't expect home or business owners to notice the difference, particularly with higher assessments clouding the tax picture.

Nonetheless, Republicans were happy with the cut, even if it was more symbolic than real.

Democrats, however, insisted commissioners could do better. They introduced a resolution setting the county's rate even lower.

By cutting costs, said commissioner Dennis Aaron, D-Oak Park, commissioners could save homeowners about \$18 a year, rather than \$3.36.

SIXTEEN REPUBLICANS voted against the proposal, while the county's seven Democrats voted for it.

"This is just another instance of Oakland County where Democrats have tried to reduce taxes and cut the cost of government only to be frustrated by the tax-and-spend Republican majority," Pernick said.

Another Democrat criticized Republican commissioners for not lowering taxes even more.

Republicans scoff at Gov. Blanchard's tax cut proposals, said John Kinney, a county commission candidate in the 17th District which includes all or part of Berkley, Lathrup Village and Huntington Woods.

"But when Democrats propose cutting taxes, they reject it," said Kinney, who is running against incumbent John E. Olsen of Huntington Woods.

Kinney also singled out Olsen for not being present to vote on the final tax cut.

Olsen and Thomas A. Law, R-West Bloomfield, attended the first part of Thursday's meeting as well as a Republican caucus before it. But neither was present for the final tax cut vote, according to the official board record.

Olsen and Law are members of the Oakland County Parks and Recreation Commission and are attending the annual meeting of the National Recreation and Park Association that started Thursday in Phoenix, Ariz.

## Thanksgiving baskets for needy

Low income Oakland County families who wish to receive a Thanksgiving basket must apply this week, Oct. 15-19, in the gym of All Saints Episcopal Church, Orchard Lake Road and Exchange Street in Pontiac.

Applicants will be asked to verify income as well as the size of their family. Three pieces of identification will be required, which can include birth certificates and school records.

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Thanksgiving week and registrants will be assigned a pick-up date and time when applying.

Pontiac Area Lighthouse expects to serve over 6,000 people during its 14th annual Thanksgiving food basket distribution program.

Volunteers to sort and pack the baskets can begin helping Monday, Nov. 12, while the deadline for food basket donations is Friday, Nov. 16.

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