

House eyes Jan. 31 raise rejection deadline

By Tim Richard
staff writer

The Michigan House of Representatives is likely Friday to reject a 16 percent two-year pay increase in light of last week's rejection by the Senate.

The Senate's 34-vote last Friday was not unanimous. Robert Geake, R-Northville, and two Detroit Demo-

crats abstained — the equivalent of favoring the pay increase. Jack Fax-on, D-Farmington Hills, had an excused absence because he was "in California on legislative business," according to his staff.

"The pay increase was deserved and was in order," Geake told the Capitol press corps after the session. "I made it clear to my constituents."

REPUBLICANS delayed the start of session two hours as they caucused. Geake said there was discussion of whether to reject the whole package — 4 percent and 12 percent annual increases and mileage changes — or just part.

"Democrats wanted to vote yes or no on the whole package," Geake said.

Geake's abstention was a political

courtesy members pay to their colleagues. If you can't vote with them, you quietly vote no or abstain, and you don't speak on the floor against their position.

With the exception of the three who abstained, several GOP leaders changed their positions. Senate majority leader Dick Posthumus of Alto and assistant majority leader Fred Dillingham of Fowlerville had pub-

licly favored the increase in earlier surveys but voted to reject as political pressure mounted last week.

Area members voting to reject were Republicans Max Dunaskis of Lake Orion, Doug Cruce of Troy and Dave Honigman of West Bloomfield, and Democrats William Faust of Westland and George Z. Hart of Dearborn.

THE SENATE approved a resolution by Jack Welborn, R-Kalamazoo, to reject a package of pay increases proposed by the State Employees Compensation Commission.

"I'm confident the House will follow suit," said Posthumus.

Deadline for House rejection is Jan. 31. The House must approve the identical resolution for the rejection to stick. If the House doesn't act or if its resolution differs, the pay increases take effect.

That caused a political flap over the usually routine motion to schedule the Senate's next session. Majority floor leader Phil Arthurhult, R-Whitehall, announced the next session for Feb. 5, five days after the deadline.

Welborn objected. "All they (House members) have to do is change one comma or one word" and the pay hike would take effect. Welborn moved to meet Jan. 31, the same day the House is scheduled to vote. His motion was rejected 21-16.

Voting for Welborn's date were Republicans Honigman and Dunaskis. Opposed were Democrats Geake, Cruce and Dillingham, and Democrats Faust and Hart.

IF THE REJECTION holds, it will be first since the independent compensation commission was created in 1968. The panel had proposed a package that would cost \$10.7 million over two years.

Legislative salaries would go from the current annual \$45,540 to \$47,288 on Oct. 1 and \$52,800 in 1992. Expense allowances and mileage reimbursement also would rise. Automatic payment for a weekly round trip between the Capitol and the legislator's home district would have been replaced with unlimited business mileage.

Administrative salaries would rise by varying percentages — governor, up 12.9 percent from \$106,690 to \$120,500; lieutenant governor, up 3.5 percent from \$80,300 to \$83,100.

Supreme Court justices pay would rise 12.5 percent from \$106,610 to \$120,000. In addition, nearly 600 appeals, circuit, probate and district judges would get equivalent raises because their salaries are a fixed percentage of the justices'.

THE PAY proposal brought lawmakers plenty of heat, but what made the rejection so overwhelming was the deepening budget crisis.

"It would be hypocritical to propose such large cuts in our state budget and at the same time accept pay raises for ourselves," said Cruce of Troy.

Earlier in the week, the Senate Appropriations favored, but the House Appropriations Committee killed, a package of budget cuts proposed by Gov. John Engler.

Few complaints heard on county raises

By Pat Murphy
staff writer

Tom Law had an easy come-back against a person chiding him about the 9.2-percent pay increase he and his colleagues on the Oakland County Board of Commissioners received this month.

"You should talk," said Law, a Republican from West Bloomfield Township.

Law's case was unusual. The person doing the chiding was his brother, Jerry, who leveled a few good-natured barbs at the pay increase approved by Oakland com-

missioners at their last meeting on Dec. 13.

That increase raised the base salary from \$19,198 per year to \$20,964.

But Jerry Law, had little room to talk. He's State Rep. Gerald H. Law, R-Plymouth Township, who is in line for a hefty pay increase of his own.

He and other state legislators are scheduled to receive a 16-percent pay increase as a result of the compensation package approved by the State Officers Compensation Commission.

THAT PROPOSED PAY raise for

legislators, however, kicked off a storm of protest. Voters are incensed at the prospect of what they see as excessive pay raises at a time the state faces a \$1 billion budget deficit that is threatening to force layoffs as well as cutbacks in state programs.

The Michigan Senate Thursday voted to reject the proposed raise. That moves the proposal to the House where Law and his colleagues must vote on it.

"It's probably going down," said Jerry Law, who co-sponsored a move to reject the pay raise. "We deserve a raise. But a 16-percent increase won't work."

He predicted legislators will get no raise this year. "Even if we voted ourselves 1 percent, we'd see it in literature from our opponents."

Such voter resentment may be unjustified. Law said, particularly in light of raises approved by other governmental agencies.

"Wayne County Commissioners get a 38-percent increase and nobody said anything," said Law. "Oakland County Commissioners get 9.2 percent and nobody said anything. But we get crucified for 16 percent."

While Oakland County commis-

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...but one voice protests pay hikes

By Pat Murphy
staff writer

The 9.2-percent pay raise for Oakland County commissioners is not only unwarranted but grounds for recall, said William McMaster, a Birmingham public relations man and pugacious tax foe.

McMaster won at least a partial victory Wednesday when, at his insistence, the Oakland County Election Commission scheduled a hearing on his petitions to recall County Commissioner Donald W. Jensen, R-Birmingham.

The hearing is planned for 8:30 a.m. Feb. 5.

Scheduling the hearing is an apparent reversal for the election com-

mission that earlier this month ruled Jensen, like other public officials, could not be recalled until he was in office for at least six months.

Thus Jensen, who began his second term of office Jan. 3, could not be the object of recall until at least June 3, according to the commission's ruling.

That decision seemed to end the controversy, even though McMaster chimed county commissioners did not have any six-month "honeymoon" during which they could not be recalled.

McMASTER REFILED his recall petition, this time citing case law he said supports his contention that county commissioners can be re-

called at any time.

Election commission chairman Eugene A. Moore, who is also a probate judge, said the hearing will explore two questions.

"We'll hear arguments about when a commissioner can be recalled," Moore said. "We'll also decide whether the language in the recall

petition is sufficiently clear."

Jensen seemed unconcerned Friday when contacted about the revival of the recall effort aimed at him. "We'll just have to see what happens," he said.

McMaster, however, said Jensen

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Total liabilities 16,439
Equity capital 449,495
Total liabilities and equity capital \$465,934
EQUITY CAPITAL
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