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S'craft Apportionment Facing 3 Challenges

analysis

A three-pronged attack was launched this week on the way Schoolcraft College apportions its board of trustees' seats.

Basis of the attack is that the Livonia School District, with about half of the college district's population, gets only one of the five allocated board seats. Critics say this violates the "one-man, one-vote" principle as interpreted a year ago by the U.S. Supreme Court.

Here, in summary, is what's happening:

• Members of the New Democratic Coalition of Livonia went to court to prevent the college from holding its scheduled June 10 election until reapportionment can be achieved.

• A state legislator from

Livonia is working on a bill to require the election of community college trustees from single-member districts of equal population.

• The State Board of Education is being asked to put its weight behind yet another method of "one-man, one-vote" — the at-large election of trustees.

The college district is made up of five K-12 districts — Livonia, Clarenceville, Garden City, Northville and Plymouth.

SCHOOLCRAFT's board is organized under a state law which provides: "If the

community college district consist of three or more school districts, then one member shall be elected from each school district and three members shall be elected at large."

The Livonia School District has approximately 10 times the population of Clarenceville's, yet each has one trustee.

(Of the three at-large trustees, two are from Livonia and one from Northville. These figures are generally considered irrelevant because Livonia's at-large representation is a political accident rather than a statutory requirement. Besides, even with three board members out of eight, Livonia is proportionately under-represented.)

The Schoolcraft apportionment was rarely questioned until almost exactly one year ago. The U.S. Supreme Court, in a split decision, ruled that Kansas City, with half the board seats and 60 to 68 percent of the population, was under-represented on a metropolitan junior college board.

ROGER CRAIG, who has a

reputation as one of the state's best constitutional lawyers, today was scheduled to file a suit with the State Court of Appeals designed to force reapportionment of the Schoolcraft board.

Craig, a former state senator from Dearborn, is asking a writ of mandamus to force the Schoolcraft board to present "some kind of proposal" for electing trustees on a "one-man, one-vote" basis.

The suit will also ask injunctions against election officials to prevent them from conducting college board elections, scheduled for June 10, unless reapportionment is accomplished.

Plaintiffs are led by members of the New Democratic Coalition of Livonia, but an attempt is being made to get broader political and financial support for the suit.

Mr. and Mrs. Lee Mahoney and Mr. and Mrs. Peter Havstad will be co-hosts at a fund-raising cocktails and buffet gathering Friday evening at the Havstad home, 3861 Grenada. Some 200 invitations have been sent out.

DESPITE THE closeness of the election, Craig held hope that the case could be won in time for this year's college district voting.

"A three-man panel will be

assigned by the Court of Appeals," Craig said, "and it's not a terribly difficult issue. It can be handled with some dispatch."

He estimated the appeals court would take 30 days to decide, which would bring a settlement at that level some time in the last week of April.

If Craig's clients win, the Schoolcraft board could conceivably appeal to the State Supreme Court. But Craig predicted that the Supreme Court would quickly deny the college "leave to appeal" and consider the matter settled by the appeals court.

Among the list of plaintiffs, as of last week, was James Boswell, Schoolcraft trustee from the Livonia district who, after many absences, walked out of a board meeting early last year and hasn't been active since.

Other plaintiffs include Paul Kadish, 1970 Democratic candidate for an at-large seat on the Schoolcraft board.

All plaintiffs so far are Livonia residents.

MRS. JANE MOEHLE, chairman of the Schoolcraft board, had not been officially informed of the suit as of late Tuesday but said:

"For the time being, we are legally constituted ac-

Continued on Page 7B

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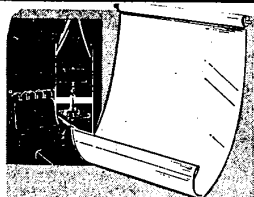
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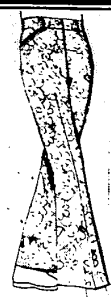
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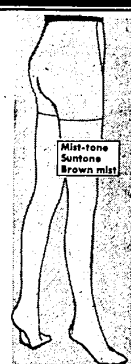
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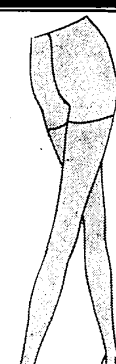


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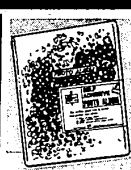
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