

# Dems' bill seeks annual open enrollment for MET

By Tim Richard  
staff writer

Parents — not Gov. Engler's administration — should decide whether the Michigan Education Trust is a good or bad deal for college-bound children, House Democrats say.

"My bill mandates an annual open enrollment period for MET," said

Rep. James Kosteva, D-Canton, sponsor of the 1988 program signed by then-Gov. James Blanchard.

"There are absolutely no sound reasons why the MET board has failed to open up enrollments," Kosteva added.

His bill also would allow the MET board to raise rates for pre-paid college tuition contracts to be set no higher than the weighted average of

tuition increases.

DEMOCRATS served notice they plan to make MET a political issue by announcing Kosteva's bill in House Speaker Lewis Dodak's conference room. Joining them was majority floor leader Pat Gagliardi, D-Drummond Island.

There's little hope the Republican-led Senate will pass the measure and less that Gov. John Engler will sign it. If MET becomes a political issue, Kosteva said, "so be it."

Under MET contracts, parents, other relatives or employers pre-pay a youngster's tuition for two or four years to a Michigan university. The Treasury invests the money. At age 18, the child is assured fully paid college tuition. Some 55,000 contracts have been sold, and 1,300 youngsters are actually attending college under MET guarantees.

THE TRICK to funding MET was the spread between tuition rate growth and interest earnings.

Under Blanchard's treasurer, Robert Bowman, earnings were projected to increase at nearly 8.8 percent a year compounded while tuition rates were projected to increase at only 7.3 percent, a spread of 1.5 percent, Kosteva said.

But the MET board says long-term interest rates are the lowest they've been in decades while universities are threatening double-digit tuition hikes as state aid wanes.

"LET THE market decide," replied Kosteva. "The demand for higher education has not diminished. At least offer residents the opportunity to invest."

Gagliardi scoffed at the suggestion interest earnings were too low. "The state Treasury's own people

are making double-digit returns (on pension fund investments). All the big houses — show me one that didn't make 18 percent over the last few years."

Democrats said MET is superior to Engler's suggestion of replacing MET with a savings bond program.

"What benefit is that to consumers?" Kosteva asked. "MET is a pooled resource."

"MET is tax free," added Gagliardi. "With his (Engler's) bond issue, you'd pay each year on your income tax."

announcement was no exception.

"MET was designed to help ensure that middle-class families can afford higher education for their children," said Kosteva's prepared statement.

Dodak also is pushing a proposal to cap tuition increases at Michigan's 15 state universities and 29 community colleges at the rate of inflation.

But both Dodak and Kosteva say capping tuition would not be a litmus test for candidates for university boards at the Democratic State Convention. The parties nominate two candidates each election for the boards of the University of Michigan, Michigan State and Wayne State universities. Rarely are there any issues between the parties.

## Learning to assert yourself

The Oakland University Continuum Center is offering assertiveness training in a five-session workshop, "Making the Assertive Choice" on Wednesdays, March 4, 11, 18, 25 and April 1, 7-9:30 p.m. at the Bloomfield Township Library.

Communications specialist Shirley Aune will show how the choices and conflicts of daily life can become positive, manageable experiences. Participants will learn the difference in passive, aggressive and asser-

tive behaviors; what the stoppers to assertiveness are, and how to keep cool in high stress situations.

The program includes practice sessions and feedback. The fee is \$119; MasterCard/VISA accepted. Registrations will be taken through March 2; call 370-3033.

The Continuum Center is part of the School of Education and Human Services and specializes in programs of personal enrichment and professional development.

## Area genealogists meet Tuesday

The Oakland County Genealogical Society presents a program entitled "Ontario Research" by William Andrus Tuesday.

Andrus is the society's treasurer.

His research began in a Wingham, Ontario cemetery, but has resulted in this overview of Canadian records available for research, genealogical societies, and seminars. Step by step, he will guide us on a path that can

lead us to the positive results he has achieved.

The meeting begins at 7 p.m. in the Rotary Room of the Baldwin Public Library in Birmingham. The library is at 380 W. Merrill, which is two blocks south of Maple (1/2 Mile Road) and two blocks east of Southfield Road.

The public is invited and there is no charge. For more information, contact Joyce Rasmussen at 357-3153.

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