

State Senate seeks to toughen teacher tenure

After a battle over school strikes, the Michigan Senate has passed three bills reforming teacher tenure, the system by which teachers get permanent job status.

Bills sponsored by Michael Bouchard, R-Birmingham, and Joanne Emmons, R-Big Rapids, won 37-0 and 36-0 Senate approval. They go to the House, which has recessed until after the Nov. 3 election.

"A positive step toward bring-

EDUCATION

ing more accountability to the system," said Bouchard, who chairs the Senate Education Committee.

The bills would:

- Lengthen a teacher's probation time from two years to three.
- Require administrators to make annual performance evaluations and development plans for the teachers.

Shorten the disciplinary appeal process from nearly 1,600 days to 300 days.

"Annual performance reviews will provide a baseline frame of reference from which to judge a teacher's progress," said Bouchard. "These bills protect teachers' rights to due process while injecting more accountability into the teacher tenure system."

Emmons said boards of education often resort to buying out bad teachers rather than taking a

chance on trying to fire them through the time-consuming, money-consuming tenure process. She cited an East Jackson case that required 312 hours of testimony over 81 days and \$190,000 in legal fees to oust a teacher.

Currently the State Tenure Commission has no time limits to hear cases. Parties which lose before the STC may go to the courts, starting with circuit courts.

Bouchard said the reform gives the STC time limits and starts

appeals with the Court of Appeals.

Senators rejected 8-31 an amendment by Nick Smith, R-Addison, providing that a teacher taking part in an illegal strike would start his or her probationary status all over.

"If you talk to the parents who support millages," said supporter Gil DiNello, D-Clinton Township, "they are dead set against teacher strikes. I really support this Nick Smith amendment be-

cause teacher strikes are obviously anathema to good relationships with parents."

Senate Democratic leader Art Miller of Warren denounced the Smith amendment, saying, "I think we should bend over and find new ways to create more professional teaching jobs and assist teachers, not belittle a profession that is going to prepare the young people for the future and the global economy."

Court's historical society gets money from state bar

The Historical Society for the U.S. District Court for the eastern district of Michigan recently received the first installment of a \$10,000 grant from the Michigan State Bar Foundation.

"This is a very special contribution," said Doris McCree, historical society president. "Not only does the State Bar Foundation grant mean that the society can fund its projects, but it also symbolizes the interest of the Michigan State Bar in the preservation of the legal legacy of our federal courts here in Michigan."

The money will be used to help meet a \$50,000 challenge grant

made by the Irwin I. and Sadie Cohn Fund of the United Jewish Charities of Detroit.

The society is sponsoring the preparation of oral histories of former chief judges John Peikens and Jim Churchill, a bibliography of judicial papers held in various locations in the district, and an exhibit of historic photos of the federal courthouses in Detroit and Fort Huron.

The society was founded last January. Area members of its board of trustees include Stanley Winkelman of Bloomfield Hills and Harold North of West Bloomfield.

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