

# Republican derides Engler on closing Lafayette Clinic

BY TIM RICHARD  
STAFF WRITER

"To be continued." Like a serial movie, the battle over closing Lafayette Clinic raged on in the State Capitol as a key Republican senator split with his party's position of closing it.

"The (Engler) administration and my caucus are totally irresponsible in what they're doing to mental health in this state," said Sen. Fred Dillingham, R-Fowlerville, No. 2 in the GOP hierarchy. Usually a quiet maverick who tries to build bipartisan coalitions, Dillingham went public on the Senate floor last week with his displeasure at Gov. John Engler's decision, supported by the Senate, to close the mental health facility at 951 E. Lafayette, Detroit.

## "Tragedy" coming

The issue was a Democratic amendment to a routine community mental health board bill that sought to keep Lafayette open. Lafayette was established in 1954 to train psychiatrists and other mental health professionals and conduct research on such illnesses as schizophrenia. It also treats 90 to 120 seriously ill patients.

"Lafayette is not a hospital serving Detroit. It's part of the mental health system of the state," Dillingham said. "Call the Department of Mental Health and ask what the waiting list is. It runs over 13,000."

"When you dismantle the system without a plan in place, you dump thousands of people and dump them on the community mental health system. We are going to see some tragic situations

on the streets of this state," Dillingham warned.

The amendment by Sen. Jim Berryman, D-Adrian, went down 18 to 19. Dillingham and 17 Democrats supported it. Opposed were 18 Republicans and one Democrat, Gil DiNello of Macomb County. One Republican was absent.

## WSU gets funds

"The battle isn't over," Berryman said. "It goes to the House, where we'll see a more reasonable approach. It will go to conference (committee), to iron out differences between House and Senate versions. Don't fear that today's vote will doom Lafayette to closure."

"We will derail this train that is trying to run over the most vulnerable people in the state. When he (Engler) is gone, we'll just have to rebuild them."

Engler seeks to turn over Lafayette's research and teaching money to Wayne State University.

Sticking with Engler was Sen. John Schwarz, R-Battle Creek, who earned his medical degree at WSU. "If we had our druthers, it wouldn't be closed and would be fully funded. But the policy is a *fait accompli* (accomplished fact)," Schwarz said.

"My goal is somehow to save Lafayette Clinic — the research and residency training functions, and even a small part of the inpatient treatment functions," Schwarz added.

"Before meeting with us, the administration wasn't willing to give anything (for research and training). Now it's willing to give \$4 million. I admonish those on the other side: 40 percent of something is better than 100 percent of

nothing.

"You have my commitment. This belongs under the aegis of the Wayne State medical school. Forget the political overtones," Schwarz said Engler would veto any legislative effort to keep Lafayette open.

In reply, Berryman read a letter from WSU President David Adamany saying the clinic should be kept open.

## Long attack

Many Democrats joined Dillingham and Berryman in a lengthy attack on closing Lafayette.

"There's a moral obligation on the part of government to take care of people who can't take care of themselves," said Sen. Jack Faxon, D-Farmington Hills. "It would be a tragic loss for Lafayette to be put into mothballs. It was unimaginable, before this governor, to dream of closing it down. It was never raised as a gubernatorial campaign issue. It's a jewel in Michigan's mental health crown."

Shifting research to WSU is "a poor substitute for continuation of a critically important clinic," said Sen. Lana Pollack, D-Ann Arbor.

"Lafayette provides the last refuge for people with severe psychiatric problems for treatment they can't get in the community," said Sen. John Kelly, D-Grosse Pointe. "Last year it had over 50,000 outpatient visits."

"We need to do more than a one-year transfer of funds that is repealed (runs out) Sept. 30, 1993," said Sen. Debbie Stabenow, D-Lansing. "There's no stability. Research is more than one year."



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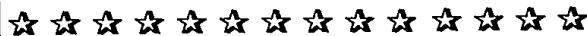
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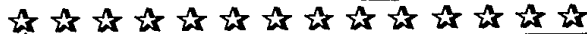
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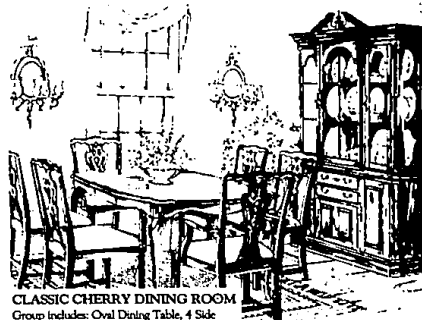
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