

# Bouchard's vote key as committee OKs tax-cut plan

BY TIM RICHARD  
STAFF WRITER

Gov. John Engler's 20 percent school property tax cut is on its way to the full state Senate after getting a key vote from Sen. Michael Bouchard, R-Birmingham.

Suburban school districts that are out-of-formula bitterly opposed Senate Bill 146, which the Senate Finance Committee recommended to the Senate Wednesday on a 3-2 party-line vote.

"I have commitments from the leadership," said Bouchard, whose yes vote drew gasps from an audience packed with school officials and parents from Livonia, Birmingham, Bloomfield and other out-of-formula districts.

Bouchard said Engler's office and Sen. Dan DeGrow, chair of the Senate Appropriations subcommittee on school aid, promised to:

- Address the loss of school revenue due to the property tax cuts.
- Avoid cutting school aid in a forthcoming executive order.

Engler had reportedly eyed cutting school aid 5 to 6 percent as a means of closing a \$400 million state budget gap.

- Retain state funding of local schools' retirement systems for at least two fiscal years.

DeGrow has wanted to cut retirement payments for out-of-formula districts to reduce the funding gap between rich and poor districts. Bouchard

**LANSING**

of Big Rapids and Doug Carl of Utica. Voting no were Democrats Debbie Stabenow of Lansing and Virgil Smith of Detroit.

Another party line vote rejected Stabenow's amendment to let the state to reimburse lost school revenue.

If enacted, the bill will cut 1993 assessments for school taxes from 60 percent of market value to 45 percent; in 1994, to 42.5 percent; and in 1995 to 40 percent. Assessments increases thereafter would

be held to the rate of consumer price inflation.

The Senate Fiscal Agency staff estimated local revenue losses at \$400 million for 3.2 percent in 1993, then \$971 million (16.2 percent) and \$1.3 billion (21 percent) in the next two years.

The State Treasury, however, would save \$82 million the first year and \$254 million the fourth on income tax rebates to homeowners with high property taxes, SFA analyst Jay Worley said.

School superintendents said they would take brutal hits.

Birmingham's John Hoefler said his losses would be \$4.9 million, \$11.4 million and \$15 million over three years — "a killer of local school districts."

Bloomfield Hills' Bob Docking said the state should try "doable" reforms such as mandating the bidding of health care contracts, statewide collective bargaining and reform of the teacher tenure law.

Birmingham parent Suzie Stafford protested "any property tax cut not tie-barred to revenue replacement," adding she was "shocked at the speed" with which the bill sailed through committee.

Patrick Anderson, economist for Alexander Hamilton Life Insurance Co. in Farmington Hills, favored the cut, saying it stimulate the economy and home prices. Realtors and the state Chamber of Commerce also favored it.

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