

Quickly-passed law extends storage tank fund

By TIM RICHARD
STAFF WRITER

Acting Gov. Connie Binsfeld has signed a swiftly passed state law to extend the life of the Michigan Underground Storage Tank Financial Assurance Fund (MUSTFA).

The fund pays claims for damage from leaking petroleum tanks, but one dissembling lawmaker said there is too little money.

"This is smoke and mirrors. This is voodoo economics," said Sen. Lana Pollack, D-Ann Arbor, when the Senate gave the mea-

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sure 30 to 2 approval. "You should not make false promises that have no funding source."

"The extension of the fee (tax on petroleum products) until the year 2003 would fund around two years worth of claims. Therefore, the claims will need to be held (stopped) somewhere in 1995, as opposed to 1993, as stated in the

bill," said Pollack.

Sen. Jack Welborn, R-Kalamazoo, voted no for a different reason. "We're increasing taxes on the people to pay for another government mandate," he said. The bill imposes a surcharge of 0.875 cents per gallon of refined petroleum products.

All area senators supported it except William Faust, D-Westland, who had an excused absence. The House gave it 105 to 0

approval. The law, PA 1, took effect Monday, the day Binsfeld signed it in the absence of Gov. John Engler.

Freshman Rep. Jerry Vorva, R-Plymouth, voting on his first law, said the bill was rushed through to prevent the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency from revoking Michigan's program.

"Exorbitant cleanup costs are nearly bankrupting many local governments and storage tank

owners," said Vorva, a former Plymouth city commissioner.

"This fund is one of only a few resources that can make cleanup efforts affordable," said Vorva, putting the average cleanup cost at \$100,000.

PA 1 will:

- Extend MUSTFA's "sunset" date from Jan. 19, 1995, to Jan. 1, 2000.
- Raise a total of \$700 million. The fee's life was extended to

2003.

- Impose penalties of five years in prison and a \$50,000 fine on violators.

Sen. Paul Wartner, R-Portage, the sponsor, said the Senate passed the extension last year, but it died in the House.

Since 1988, according to the Senate Fiscal Agency, 73,800 underground storage tanks have been registered with the State Police fire marshal.

Women lawmakers at GOP forum

The Republican Women's Forum will hear from four Republican women in the state Legislature at its next meeting beginning 6:30 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 17, at the Botsford Inn of Farmington Hills.

Admission is \$20 for members, \$25 for others.

Giving their legislative updates will be:

- Rep. Lyn Bankes, R-Livonia. Bankes was first elected to the House in 1984 and is beginning her fifth term.
- Rep. Barbara Dobb, R-West Bloomfield. A certified public accountant by trade, Dobb is beginning her second term.
- Rep. Jan Dolan, R-Farmington Hills. A former mayor and council member in Farmington Hills, Dolan is beginning her third term in the House.
- Rep. Susan Grimes-Munsell, R-Howell. Currently the Republican Whip, Grimes-Munsell has served on the House standing committees of colleges and universities, education, public utilities and taxation.

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