

Local reps say Clinton's plan gets mixed reviews

BY RALPH R. ECHTINAW
STAFF WRITER

President Bill Clinton's economic plan has drawn praise, mixed reactions and unequivocal criticism in Observer & Eccentric communities, depending on which U.S. congressman you talk to.

Clinton laid out his plan last Wednesday in a speech before a joint session of Congress. The president proposed a combination of spending cuts and tax increases designed to reduce the government's annual overspending from more than \$300 billion this year to less than \$200 billion in the 1997 budget. (The plan will not, however, reduce the government's total accumulated debt of \$4 trillion, which will continue to grow as long as the annual overspending continues.)

Of the three congressmen representing O&E area (two Democrats and one Republican), only Joe Knollenberg, R-Bloomfield Township, reported a vast majori-

THE PRESIDENT'S PLAN Congress Reacts

ty of constituent phone calls critical of Clinton's plan. Knollenberg also represents Birmingham, Bloomfield Hills, West Bloomfield, Beverly Hills, Bingham Farms, Franklin, Farmington, Farmington Hills and most of Southfield.

"The calls began to come in yesterday (last Wednesday) and literally they came in droves," he said. "Ninety nine out of one were not in favor of the anticipated Clinton tax increase. The mood was pretty sour."

Conversely, Rep. Dale Kildee, D-Flint, who also represents Rochester and Rochester Hills, reported that "the reaction of the



Dale Kildee
Reaction 'very positive'

public has been very positive." On the other hand, Rep. Sander Levin, D-Southfield, said constituent calls before Clinton's speech were "very much in opposition, (but) more evenly split" the next day, yet still more opposed than in favor. Levin represents a small portion of Southfield and all of Troy.

As for the representatives themselves, the Democrats are very much behind their president, while Knollenberg applauds only



Joe Knollenberg
Mood 'pretty sour'

Clinton's proposed spending cuts, not the tax increases. "I can commend (Clinton) for wanting to reduce staff and freeze (the pay of) federal workers," he said. "(But) he was very timid about spending cuts, (and) raising taxes does not create jobs. The plan... is a recipe for economic disaster that will only make the deficit worse."

As for the Democrats: Kildee said Clinton's plan "will be very helpful" to the people in



Sander Levin
'More opposed than in past'

his district and will "certainly help the automobile industry." Levin, who sits on the House

Ways and Means committee, which will first take up Clinton's plan, said "a lot of it is going to be difficult" to get through Congress, but "we can't sit around and do nothing. We can't keep pretending there's no problem. This plan isn't perfect, but at least it kicks the ball in the right direction."

No one, however, was predicting fast action on the plan, at least not by real-world standards. "We'll put it on a fast track," Kildee said. "But the nature of this system is that we don't work all that fast."

Said Knollenberg: "It's going to take a while to get anything through, let alone this whole package."

Also, Kildee and Levin agree that the plan should be voted on as a whole and not in parts. "It has to be absolutely tied together," Levin said.

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