

Salesman

Engler pushes tax shift plan to Rotarians

By RALPH H. ECHTNAW
STAFF WRITER

Like a big steel marble in a pinball machine, Gov. John Engler is bouncing all over the place in an attempt to sell voters on the latest property tax relief plan.

Last Monday he bounced into Troy to pitch the plan to the Pontiac Rotary Club and received a standing ovation when introduced by Oakland County Executive L. Brooks Patterson.

The plan, which will be put to the voters June 2 in the form of Proposal A, would:

- raise the state sales tax from 4 cents on the dollar to 6 cents, dedicating the additional 2 cents to education.

- reduce most school district millage levies to somewhere between 18 and 27.

- limit the growth of property assessments to 5 percent, or the inflation rate, whichever is lowest.
- and guarantee that every school district will have \$4,800 per student to work with.

Admitting that the current tax structure, featuring double-digit

assessment increases, has "driven people right out of their homes," Engler said Proposal A is the last best hope for tax reform. If it passes, homeowners could count on relatively stable tax bills and not worry about being forced out.

Alternative: status quo

The alternative is the status quo, which "will be worse (because) it's not likely we can continue to (subsidize) the districts that are spending the most money in the state."

As an example, Engler points to the Brigman school district (8 mills, \$6,700 per student) and the Dearborn school district (39 mills, \$4,700 per student). Yet the state still subsidizes Brigman to the tune of \$400,000 a year. "I think that's wrong," Engler said.

In an interview with the Observer & Eccentric after his speech, Engler agreed that a lot of folks are leery of Proposal A because they think the politicians will find some way eventually to turn this tax shift into a tax increase.



JIM RIDER/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Pitchman: Gov. John Engler said Monday in Troy that the Proposal A tax shift will change school boards from "millage committees to quality committees."

However, he said he's certain there are no loopholes in the plan that politicians can use to boost property taxes back up. The plan's guarantees, he said, will all be written into the state constitu-

tion, meaning they can only be changed by another vote of the people.

"I'm confident there are no

See ENGLER, 11A



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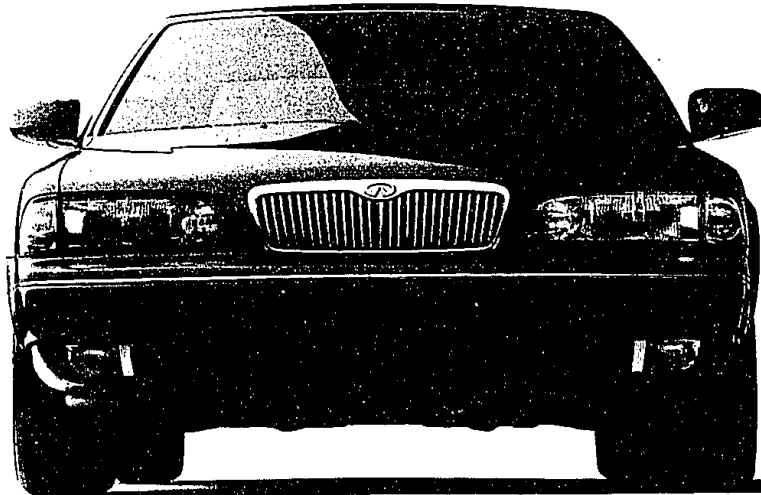
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