

Some colleges try for full-year liquor licenses

BY TIM RICHARD
STAFF WRITER

Schoolcraft College of Livonia and four other Michigan colleges could qualify for full-year liquor licenses under a hotly debated bill passed by the state Senate.

Senate Bill 83 won a bare 20-14 victory recently and was sent to the House, where action is unlikely before fall.

Oakland Community College and Oakland University weren't included in the bill.

"Two weeks ago we took the smokers out of the schools. Now we're gonna let the drunks into the colleges," said opponent Jack Welborn, R-Kalamazoo.

"We're not setting up drinking places for students," replied supporter Robert Geake, R-Northville. "Schoolcraft College has one of the best culinary arts centers in the U.S." Geake called serving of wines "absolutely appropriate and has nothing to do with student parties."

Geake is a former board chairman of Schoolcraft, a community college. Schoolcraft has served dinners to both political parties.

It hosts a series of gourmet dinners that are advertised by word of mouth and are usually sellouts.

But opponent Doug Carl, R-Utica, equated the bill with rising casualty costs, acts of violence and broken homes. "It sends a bad message," he said.

"There will be nowhere near the horrors described by the Prohibitionists here," added supporter Jack Faxon, D-Farmington Hills.

"These are the convention facilities of a civilized society."

"They can get a 24-hour license," said opponent Jim Berryman, D-Adrian.

That is what Schoolcraft and other colleges with banquet facilities currently do. The bill would remove the need for one-day applications and allow the licensing of college-related conference centers.

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Cartoons said, but sees no need for a year-round permit.

"Serving liquor is not an integral part of our culinary arts program, or part of any of our campus activities," he said. "It's certainly not something that's central to our mission."

Sen. Harry Gast, R-St. Joseph, who said he never has touched

beer, wine or whiskey in his life, sponsored the bill on behalf of Lake Michigan Community College. With the demise of major hotels in downtown St. Joseph and Benton Harbor, LMC set up a business conference center.

Otherwise, said Gast, there isn't a good spot unless one travels 35 miles to South Bend or 50 miles to Kalamazoo.

As the bill came through the State Affairs Committee, others

were added to the list: Eastern Michigan University's corporate education center, Schoolcraft's Waterman Center and Macomb Community College.

On the Senate floor, Phil Hoffman, R-Jackson, sought to have Jackson Community College's Potter Center added to the list. On first try, Hoffman got only 13 votes, with 20 needed. So Hoffman voted against the entire bill, and it lost.

An hour later, supporters cut a deal with Hoffman. Jackson was added, Hoffman supported the bill, and it had the necessary 20 votes.

Here's how area senators voted: Yes — Republicans Mat Danakias of Lake Orion, Geake, David Honigman of West Bloomfield, and Democrats William Faust of Westland, Faxon and George Hart of Dearborn. No — none, though Hart later

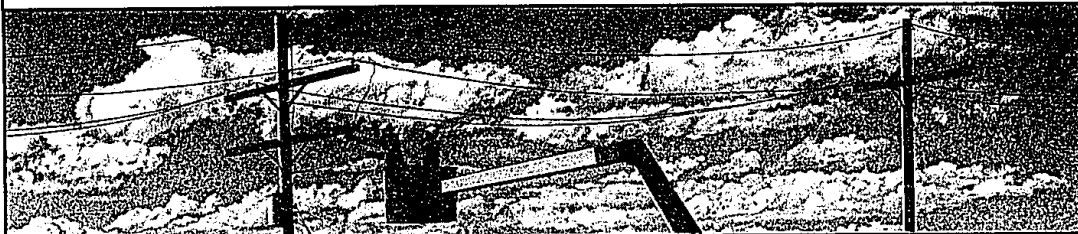
tried to get a second reconsideration and lost.

Absent — Michael Bouchard, R-Birmingham.

A secondary issue was whether the publicly supported colleges will compete with business.

The House is likely to send Senate Bill 83 to the Liquor Control Committee. Refer to the bill number when writing your representative in the State Capitol Building, Lansing 48909.

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