

Oakland official cites tax loss

**BY TIM RICHARD
STAFF WRITER**

The law that eliminated school property taxes also will have a "devastating effect on county budgets," said a top Oakland official.

"Senate Bill 1, as it stands, will cost county governments \$200 million. This translates into a 12 percent cut in the average county's general fund revenues," said Oakland County commissioner Donn L. Wolf, R-Farmington Hills.

Wolf, as president of the Michigan Association of Counties, is lobbying state legislators to rescind at least part of the law that wiped out \$6 billion in school property tax revenues.

The impact on counties, however, was apparently overlooked, Wolf said. Here is the impact, as calculated by county treasurers:

■ Tax freeze — SB 1 froze as-

COUNTY

assessments for a year, giving property owners 15 months to appeal assessments. Cost to counties of what might have been: \$40 million.

■ Delinquent taxes — Counties receive a 4 percent collection fee and interest for collecting delinquent and late property taxes for other units of government. Elimination of school property taxes will mean \$160 million in lost revenue to counties. Wolf asked "full reimbursement" from Lansing.

■ Possible loss of revenue sharing — Counties get two batches of state shared revenue: one that is constitutionally mandated, another that is voted by the Legislature. Gov. John Engler's administration is looking at cutting the second batch.

"This is a trial balloon," Wolf

conceded, "and we are watching it very carefully because it would reduce county services by another \$170 million.

The \$170 million includes \$140 million from the personal income tax and \$30 million from the single business tax.

"Lawmakers must not take away this \$170 million in county services," Wolf said on behalf of M.A.C.

If all three cuts occurred, Oakland County would lose 18 percent of its revenue — \$3.8 million from the delinquent fee, \$10 million from the freeze and \$15 million from state shared revenue.

If all three cuts occurred, Livingston County would lose 29 percent of its revenue — \$512,000 in delinquent fees, \$2.4 million in delinquent taxes, \$1 million from the freeze and \$1.7 million in state shared revenue.

If all three cuts occurred, Clinton County would lose 16 percent of its revenue — \$141,000 in delinquent fees, \$245,000 in delinquent taxes, \$180,000 from the freeze, and \$90,000 in state shared revenue.

If all three cuts occurred, Eaton County would lose 17 percent of its revenue — \$216,000 in delinquent fees, \$600,000 in delinquent taxes, \$283,000 from the freeze, and \$1.6 million in state shared revenue.

If all three cuts occurred, Ionia County would lose 22 percent of its revenue — \$387,000 in delinquent fees, \$280,000 in delinquent taxes, \$159,000 from the freeze and \$94,000 in state shared revenue.

"A lot of county services are at stake," said Wolf, citing "senior citizen programs, community health services, sheriff patrols, road funding and a lot of others."



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Area Catholic churches set free classes

Five Oakland County Catholic churches are offering free classes on the church for people thinking about becoming Catholics.

Linda Simonelli, who teaches the course for St. Ives Church of Southfield, said that the idea is to "help the people understand what it means to be Christian and

Catholic."

There's no call to be scared, though, Simonelli says, because the course is "really a journey. It's not a teaching. It's a beautiful process."

The classes are small and personalized. Simonelli said the greatest number of students she's ever had at one time was eight.

Simonelli teaches her classes 7:30-8:30 p.m. Thursdays. The average person should attend the class about a year before trying to get accepted into the church, Simonelli said. Prospective students should call her at 353-3410. Sister Anne McGinn teaches

the course at St. Owen Church of Franklin. Her classes begin 10 a.m. Sundays from September to May. Enrollments will be accepted until mid November. Call Sister Anne at 625-2209.

Michelle Meyer teaches the course at Holy Name Church of Birmingham.

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