

Legislators support welfare reform, tax plan

By TIM RICHARD
STAFF WRITER

Suburban legislators mostly liked Gov. John Engler's themes: tougher prison sentences, work for welfare recipients, lower taxes, a sales tax shift to support schools, rejuvenated state parks.

Democrats liked his bridge to Detroit Mayor Dennis Archer but called Engler a Johnny-come-lately on stiffer prison sentences.

Engler's call for an end to "welfare as we know it" and no school sports for teens who father children played well on both sides of the Hall of Representatives aisle Tuesday as Engler's fourth state of the state message opened the election year session of the Legislature.

The governor's going to have to do some fast talking" on his March 15 school finance plan, said freshman Rep. Penny Crisman, R-Rochester. "People don't like a gun at their head."

"I had 70 people at a Lions club screaming, 'You haven't given us a choice. We're not gonna save that much,'" said Crisman, who isn't taking a position on the budget plan, with its sales tax hike, versus the legislative plan with its income, property and business tax hikes.

Rep. Jan Dolan, R-Farmington Hills, also isn't supporting or opposing the ballot plan. But the No. 4 Republican in the House

said the Legislature was right to cut local property taxes and was better than the alternative: having hostile outstate legislators dump \$13 million in budget busting pension costs on her school district.

"I liked what I heard about welfare reform," said freshman Rep. Greg Kaza, R-Rochester Hills. Engler said he would seek "new federal waivers giving us more flexibility to encourage and reward work" by welfare recipients. Engler also vowed a crackdown on teen boys who father children and then fail to support them.

Rep. Barbara Dobb, R-Union Lake, a key player in the House Taxation Committee, vigorously supports Engler's ballot proposal, arguing property tax cuts and a sales tax increase "helps the homeowners of my district, and doesn't increase the single business tax. I put school finance and property tax reform as the two foremost issues in my two campaigns."

Dobb said Engler's message on youth and violent crime struck

home, even in her lakes area district. "It's not just an urban problem," she said.

Sen. Michael Bouchard, R-Birmingham, has a motto: "We need to do more with less." The first term senator applauded Engler's appointment of a commission to reinvent government as "a strong piece. With reform, we can reduce the need of raising taxes."

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Her previous experience as an interior designer includes 15 years with Englanders in Birmingham and 6 years with Wiggs in Bloomfield Hills.

Carol's work has appeared in the Eccentric, Monthly Detroit magazine, The Detroit News daily issues. Her home, which she designed, was featured on the cover of The Detroit News special Home Edition. She has also designed rooms for The Detroit Symphony Showhouse.

A versatile designer, she enjoys both contemporary and period design, herself possessing several fine antiques collected here and on trips throughout Europe. Mixing is a special area of expertise.

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