

Engler sends Mervenne to area office



New boss: Anne Mervenne has been named director of Gov. John Engler's Detroit office. Mervenne replaces Susan Heintz, who is expected to be the next state Republican party chairwoman.

Information contact: Malcolm Mead of DNR at (617) 335-4639.

More Capitol capsules:
After many years in Lansing, Anne Mervenne is returning to southeastern Michigan. The Birmingham-raised political pro will become director of Gov. John Engler's Detroit office, maintaining contact with regional and local agencies from the state office building on Sixth Street.
Like her predecessor, Susy Heintz, Mervenne has been an elected county commissioner, in Ingham County. She worked for state Sen. Doug Cruse of Troy until Engler took office in 1991, then jumped to the governor's staff.
For three years she was in charge of screening candidates for hundreds of gubernatorial appointments to everything from the Apple Commission to the Water Wall Drillers Advisory Board.
In the last year Mervenne has headed the staff of the Women's Commission, a strong advocate of spouse-abuse legislation.
Heintz, a former Wayne County commissioner from Northville,

has Engler's backing to become Republican Party chair at the February state convention.
For those who keep count, Engler has one of the most female-led administrations in Michigan history: Lt. Gov. Connie Blaszfeld, new chief of staff Sharon Rothwell, Mervenne in Detroit, LeAnn Redick in Washington, and Lucille Taylor of Southfield as legal counsel.
2 new judges
The state Court of Appeals now has 10 judges who got there by appointment versus 14 who got there by election.
Engler appointed Henry W. Saad, of Birmingham, to replace John H. Shepherd, 60, of Southfield, who resigned. A partner in the Bloomfield Hills office of the Dickinson-Wright firm, Saad also has taught at the University of Detroit and Wayne State University law schools. Engler noted that Saad had been tapped in 1992 by then-President George

Bush for a federal judgeship, but the appointment died for lack of Senate confirmation.
Engler also tapped former U.S. district attorney Stephen J. Markman for the state's second highest court. He will replace Elizabeth Weaver, of Glen Arbor, whom voters on Nov. 8 elevated to the state Supreme Court. Markman is of counsel to the firm of Miller Canfield. Although previously a metro Detroit resident, Markman will represent a northern Michigan district.
Both appointments are good until 1996, when the appellate judges must stand for election to serve the remainder of Shepherd's and Weaver's terms.
Pop quiz: Michigan, on paper, elects its judges, but how many of the seven Supreme Court justices originally got their jobs by appointment? **Answer:** Four, James Brickley, Patricia Boyle, Dorothy Riley (who was appointed, disqualified, then elected) and Conrad Mallett Jr. (who went on

to win the last two years of a term and this year won a full eight-year term).
Larsen is back
Whatever happened to Mel Larsen, the rising legislative star in the 1970s and state GOP chair under Gov. William G. Milliken?
He's back in public service on the Michigan Osteopathic Medicine Advisory Board. Its job is to "assist Michigan State University's College of Osteopathic Medicine in providing the highest quality education to its students," according to an announcement from Engler's office.
Larsen, now of Birmingham, is senior vice president of Club Cars, Inc., a former chair of the Samaritan Center Hospital Divisional Board and former vice chair at Mercy Hospital Health Services of Detroit.
He started his working life as a teacher in Pontiac and represented a northern Oakland County state House district for several

terms. Once the GOP nominee for secretary of state, he was mowed down by the now-departing Richard Austin.
The Engler announcement made no mention of the fact that Larsen led the state GOP. In those days, Engler was a maverick state representative who frequently was at odds with the Milliken moderates.
Plastics, anyone?
The state Department of Natural Resources is inviting public comment on a proposed consent order for Liberator Plastics Inc. of Walked Lake. The order would govern control of volatile organic compound emissions from the automotive plastic parts coating operation.
Dennis Drake, air quality division acting chief, is scheduled to make a decision after public comment is taken. "If requested in writing by Jan. 6, 1995, a public hearing will be scheduled," according to a DNR announcement.

Some Republicans fear new voter registration law

By TIM RICHARD
STAFF WRITER
Democrats may benefit — but how much? — from federally ordered changes in Michigan's voter registration laws.
The Michigan Legislature in the last week put the finishing touches on laws to bring the state into compliance with the National Voter Registration Act.
"It's a very partisan bill," said state Rep. Greg Kaza, R-Rochester Hills, who was on the short end of an 85-14 vote on final passage.
"I don't think it should be easier for welfare recipients to register to vote than anyone else. Those are traditional Democratic constituencies. It's another mandate from Washington without the money to pay for it."
Kaza voiced the same objection as many congressional Republicans when Democrats passed the federal act in 1993. NVRA, also known as the "motor voter" act,

requires the states to offer welfare recipients, unemployment-compensation applicants, and other social-services clients a chance to register when they file for benefits.
NVRA also requires states to offer voter registration when people get driver's licenses and buy new plates, but Michigan already has had such a system since the 1970s. Michigan also provides voter registration service for high school students turning age 18.
President George Bush vetoed the first NVRA attempt in 1992, but congressional Democrats quickly re-passed it once Bill Clinton was in the White House. Advocates say its purpose is to increase the proportion of American adults registered to vote from 75 to 90 percent.
In the Michigan House, all 14 no votes came from Republicans — including Kaza, John Jamien of Bloomfield Township, Jerry Vorva of Plymouth and Deborah

Whyman of Canton Township. All other Observer & Eccentric area representatives voted yes.
Others voting yes included Willis Bullard Jr., R-Milford; Dan Gustafson, R-Williamston; Susan Munsell, R-Howell; Tom Middleton, R-Ortonville; Kirk Profit, D-Ypsilanti; and Frank Fitzgerald, R-Grand Ledge. Alan Cropey, R-DeWitt, voted no.
But one key Republican stalwart is convinced lawmakers blunted many of the possible bad effects. He is Robert LaBrant, general counsel for the Michigan Chamber of Commerce and a

member of the transition team of Candice Miller, the incoming GOP secretary of state.
"The U.S. Department of Justice can sue Michigan," said LaBrant. "If we were sued for non-compliance, we face the potential, under Sec. 5, that all state voting law changes would have to be cleared with the Department of Justice."
"Michigan is the largest industrial state that hasn't enacted compliance legislation. Michigan might move to the top of the (bad) list very quickly. And the NVRA opens us to citizen lawsuits," he

added.
(Commented Kaza: "That's a heckuva way to make law — pass something because of our fear of Washington.")
"The Michigan law gives great discretion to the governor," LaBrant said, noting John Engler can set up voter registration in other offices but can't eliminate it from welfare and human-services offices.
LaBrant cited two good features, from a Republican point of view, in the new law:
■ There will be a statewide, computer-accessible list of registered voters as of Jan. 1, 1997. Currently, 1,700 city and township clerks maintain separate lists.
Under the new law, when a person re-registers (say) at a new address, his or her old registration is canceled. "That will end fraud and tie drivers' license and state

identification cards into the system," he said.
■ The federal law requires a system of registration by postcard, which LaBrant sees as inviting fraud. So the Michigan law will require that a person voting for the first time after registering by postcard must appear in person at the polls.
The state Senate repaired what LaBrant and Republicans saw as pro-Democratic defects in the original House Bill 5531. The differences were settled in a conference committee.
Although voter registration files are public records, some data will be exempt from disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act. Closed will be any record that a person declined to register to vote; the office that received his or her application; the voter's driver's license number (or state ID number); and the month and day of birth.

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Greg Kaza
State representative

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