

House approval of school aid bill remains in doubt

BY TIM RICHARD
STAFF WRITER

The governor would be able to send a state trustee to take over an "educationally bankrupt" school under a public school aid bill adopted by the state Senate.

"Unconstitutional," said Senate minority leader John Cherry of Ohio and Sen. Chris Dingell of Trenton as the Senate on June 4 gave the bill 28-9 approval and returned it to the House for concurrence in amendments.

The House, now controlled 67-52 by Democrats, is unlikely to concur in Senate amendments, and the \$2.2 billion bill is almost certain to go to a conference committee. There House Bill 4310 would be brokered before the Legislature adjourns for the Fourth of July.

Here is how area senators voted on final passage:

Rep: Republicans Bill Bullard Jr. of Milford, Mat Dunakes of Lake Orion.

No (all Democrats): Cherry, Gary Peters of Bloomfield Township.

Not voting: Mike Bouchard, R-Birmingham. Bouchard was negotiating elsewhere in the Capitol on a package of casino gaming control bills but ducked in occasionally to vote on amendments.

'Bankrupt' districts

Gov. John Engler asked during his state of the state address for power for the state to take over "educationally bankrupt" districts. The idea was generally unpopular with area lawmakers. Neither he nor the House put enabling language into the state school aid bill.

But the Senate did and had a first-term debate. The Senate version:

- Allows the governor to declare a district educationally bankrupt if, in each of the previous five years, more than 50 percent of the pupils scored "low" on the state tests for fourth, fifth, seventh or eighth grades.
- Requires the superintendent of public instruction, Art Ellis, to report on failing districts by June 30 each year. Ellis would nominate and Engler would appoint the trustee, who would have a one-year contract.
- Requires the trustee to prepare and implement a plan to achieve "educational solvency."

The trustee would have all the powers of the elected school board, including power to dismiss the superintendent and top administrators.

After a year, the state superintendent could find the bankrupt conditions no longer exist, and the governor could release the district, imposing probationary conditions for three years.

Democrats Dingell and Cherry said that section of the bill would violate both the U.S. and Michigan constitutions by impairing contracts, including union contracts.

Dingell recalled how a state receiver in the Eccore district paid himself \$180 an hour and held many televised news conferences at that rate.

Sen. Al Wheeler Smith, D-Salem, lost with an amendment to restrict the trustee to the already-voted local operating budget. She said the state should not be able to put in fresh money to make its operation look good in comparison.

DeGrow replied that "there's no money" in the bill for bankrupt districts, and so Smith's amendment was unnecessary. The Smith amendment went down on a 15-21 nearly party-line vote.

Smith tried another amendment that would prevent the trustee from removing existing administrators. DeGrow replied that "the trustee needs his own people in there," and Republicans voted down the amendment.

How it works

The Senate set the basic "foundation allowance" per pupil at \$5,452, up 2.9 percent or \$154. Some poorer districts got more, in order to bring them up to the others.

Engler had recommended a foundation of \$5,445, up 2.6 percent. The House voted an allowance of \$5,497, up 3 percent or \$159.

The Senate proposed \$20 million to enable class sizes to be reduced in pilot districts — those where at least 50 percent of pupils are eligible for free lunches.

The Senate gave Engler \$9.5 million for a career preparation program, similar to the amount approved by the House.

Sen. Dale Shugars, R-Portage, won approval of an amendment to prohibit use of state aid to provide abortions for employees

Aid by district

Here are per-pupil "foundation allowances" (rounded to the nearest dollar) under the Senate bill, followed by the percentage increase from last year and the dollar increase from last year.

Birmingham — \$10,839, up 1.4 percent and \$154 from last year.
Southfield — \$9,921, up 1.6 percent and \$154.
Avondale — \$7,228, up 2.2 percent and \$154.
Bloomfield Hills — \$10,916, up 1.4 percent and \$154.
Claremont — \$7,037, up 2.2 percent and \$154.
Oxford — \$5,920, up 2.7 percent and \$154.
Troy — \$7,996, up 2 percent and \$154.
West Bloomfield — \$7,848, up 2 percent and \$154.
Clarkston — \$5,908, up 2.7 percent and \$154.
Farmington — \$9,029, up 1.7 percent and \$154.
Holly — \$6,531, up 2.9 percent and \$154.
Lake Orion — \$6,720, up 2.3 percent and \$154.
Rochester — \$6,786, up 2.3 percent and \$154.
Walled Lake — \$7,415, up 2.1 percent and \$154.

or dependents. The unrecorded vote was 14 with four absent.

Schwarz opposed it, saying "it's social policy that doesn't belong in an appropriations bill." Cherry said the money belongs to the employees who earned it and should be bargainable.

OCC grads take 'Wing'

BY TIM RICHARD
STAFF WRITER

Gov. John Engler congratulated 2,000 men and women Friday for earning what he called "the passport to success" — degrees from Oakland Community College.

"You are all winners," he said, emphasizing the W as in hockey's Detroit Red Wings. The first governor 24 years to address an OCC graduation class, Engler spoke at ceremonies attended by 7,000 people in The Palace of Auburn Hills. He singled out four.

"One of those winners is Adriana Curtis, who is receiving her certificate in business information systems," Engler said of a graduate born with multiple physical disabilities.

"Adriana has not let her disability slow her down. In high school, she was the first disabled person to walk with her class at graduation. Tonight, with God's help, she will leave her wheelchair behind and walk up here to receive her certificate," he said of the woman selected as one of 17 Michigan students statewide to receive an "investing in abilities" award with his endorsement.

"Another winner is Douglas Diggle, who is receiving an associate degree in general studies. Like most of you, Doug has held down a job while earning his degree. Actually, he has been working three jobs and going to class."

"OCC helped Doug overcome his learning disability. He has developed self-confidence and learned how to organize his life. That's something we could all benefit from," Diggle plans to



Gov. John Engler commencement speaker

enroll in Oakland University's business management program in fall.

"A single parent with five children, Ruthie Howard knows how tough it is to make it to work, make day care arrangements for the kids and make ends meet — let alone make it to class," Engler said. "I know that Ruthie's children are proud of their mom, and she's proud of them, too, because, as her kids put it, they pitched in to help their mother make it."

Howard earned her associate degree in general studies and will enroll this fall in a respiratory therapy program.

Engler finished with Marci Banish, a student marshal representing the Royal Oak Campus and winner of an OCC trustee scholarship.

Banish was recently selected by the USA Today Phi Theta Kappa All-USA academic team. Just as important, she is actively involved in PTK's volunteer programs. Marci understands that doing well in life means doing

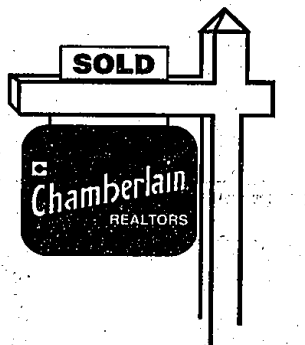
good," said Engler, who received an honorary degree in humane arts and letters and an escort of 10 Oakland Police Academy graduates.

After praising Chancellor Richard Thompson, board chair Judith Wiser and the trustees for keeping tuition rates flat for three straight years — "a tremendous achievement, one matched by only one other community college or public university in Michigan" — Engler said OCC and community colleges have a warm spot, not only in his administration's heart, but in its budget.

"That's why our state budget has increased per student funding by nearly 50 percent since 1990 — double the rate of inflation," Engler said, adding:

"Of course, OCC is home to the Advanced Technology Center, a state-of-the-art training facility virtually unmatched anywhere in America. Last year, 20,000 men and women received customized training at ATC in every aspect of manufacturing from design to production." The governor said the state has supported ATC and OCC with \$8 million to help train nearly 9,000 workers for companies ranging from Kmart to Chrysler.

Portions of OCC's commencement will be broadcast at 4 p.m. today on WTVS, Ch. 56. A college-produced video will feature Steve Allen, OCC graduate and executive chef of the Golden Mushroom in Southfield; Douglas Wender, medical technician from Milford and ceramics student at OCC; and Doris Mobley, Clarkston resident and paraprofessional in the computer aided design program.



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