

Leadership Oakland accepts applications

Applications are being accepted for the eighth Leadership Oakland education program to begin in September 1997 through June 1998. The program is designed to educate business leaders on the economic and social challenges and issues of Oakland County.

This year-long learning experience is comprised of 10 workshop sessions which provide a framework for participants to understand about Oakland County through speaker presentations, shared experiences and hands-on involvement.

Leadership Oakland provides a forum to discuss, issues, create solutions and enhance capabilities linking leaders with leaders and leaders with their community.

Classes are held once a month with each session focusing on a specific subject area.

The approximately 50 participants are selected from public, private and non-profit organizations and include manufacturing, retail, social services, professional service and government. Participants must be members of a participating chamber of commerce of the Oakland Leadership Council, Inc.

Tuition for the program is \$1,800. Scholarships are being offered by the Oakland Leadership Council. Scholarships are also being offered by United Way of Oakland County and the Easter Seals Society of Southeastern Michigan. Mercy Health plan is providing two matching scholarships to members of the Oakland Leadership Council.

Interested applicants should contact Lucia Sulcicki, Executive Director of Leadership Oakland at (248) 952-6880. Applications will be accepted through July 8, 1997.

Attorney urges court to pay schools

By TIM RICHARD
BRADFY WRITER

Dennis Pollard, the attorney who won the 17-year suburban school funding case against the state, told the Michigan Supreme Court that Lansing should pay off 84 local boards plus interest.

The Bloomfield Hills attorney also blasted the Legislature for trying to use the suburbs' own money to pay off what it owes them for bilingual and driver education.

"The remedy... should be only of a money judgment in favor of the named, affected school districts" and not individual taxpayers, Pollard said in a follow-up brief requested by the Supreme Court. He proposed a total of \$667 million.

The state and Pollard have another week to file rebuttal briefs before the justices decide the money question.

Dick Headlee, the retired Farmington Hills insurance executive who led the drive for the constitutional amendment requiring the state to pay for all services it mandates, took the opposite view: "The money

should go back in the form of tax relief. It should not be a local government windfall," he said in an interview from his retirement home in Utah.

No, said Pollard. It would be impossible to track down all of them because as many as 32 percent of renters and 10 percent of homeowners move each year.

And those who moved into the 84 affected school districts (say) this fall would get a break on their Dec. 1 tax bills even though they "will not have suffered, even indirectly, from the effects of the underfunding which is being remedied... Such a remedy would violate the axiomatic tenet that the relief awarded should benefit the person wronged."

Moreover, said Pollard, the court lacks power to order a tax abatement (such as Headlee proposed) because the constitution says, "The power of taxation is

vested in the legislature." Rather, the correct remedy for the state's underfunding of special education and other services is for the state to pay up, he said.

Pollard proposed the districts be paid principal of \$491.5 million plus interest for a total of \$667 million. Here is how his proposal would affect local plaintiff school districts:

- Avondale \$4.8 million.
- Birmingham \$23 million.
- Farmington \$22 million.
- Oakland Intermediate School District \$8 million.
- Rochester \$21 million.
- Southfield \$13 million.
- Troy \$23 million.
- Walled Lake \$13 million.
- West Bloomfield \$12 million.

Sec. 29 of the Headlee amendment prohibits the state from requiring "a new activity or an

increase in the level of any activity... beyond that required by existing law... unless a state appropriation is made and disbursed to pay the unit of local government."

In 1980 Donald Durant of Warren Fitzgerald School District filed the original suit, seeking special education funds. His and 33 other cases were consolidated into one and became known as "the Durant case."

The Supreme Court decided last month in favor of the school districts. Other school districts have filed claims but were not part of the class action lawsuit.

Anger showed through in Pollard's brief as he attacked the Engler administration and lawmakers for trying to use the 84 districts' own 1997 state aid to reimburse \$21 million for mandatory bilingual and driver's education under the suit.

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