

Bouchard bill could exempt malls from federal rights act

BY TIM RICHARD
STAFF WRITER

A bill allowing shopping malls to restrict kids under 16 is halfway through the Michigan Legislature amid signs that rougher sailing is ahead.

After bitter debate, the Senate on July 1 approved the bill 24-12. Sponsored by Sen. Michael Bouchard, R-Birmingham, the bill exempts malls from the Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act and allows malls, under local ordinances, to exclude minors under 16 after 6 p.m. on Fridays and Saturdays unless accompanied by a parent or person age 19 or older.

"I am concerned that here we have private action which will allow a private entity to amend a very crucial civil rights legislation," said Sen. Gary Peters, R-Bloomfield Township. Peters said Bouchard's bill allows "selective enforcement by removing children or youngsters that have not done anything wrong."

He said the provision allowing a 19-year-old to supervise means "you are not likely to deal with gangs in the mall. They (mall owners) would have much preferred to see a 21-year-old, if you are going to do it."

Peters had his name removed as a sponsor of the bill.

All 12 Senate votes against the bill were cast by Democrats. The bill goes to the Democratic-controlled House, which is unlikely to take it up before fall at the earliest.

Here is how area senators voted:

YES — Republicans Loren Bennett of Canton, Bouchard of Birmingham, Bill Bullard Jr. of Milford, Mat Dunaskiss of Lake Orion, Robert Geake of Northville, Mike Rogers of Brighton, John Schwarz of Battle Creek and Democrat George Z. Hart of Dearborn.

NO — Democrats John Cherry of Clio, Peters of Bloomfield Township and Alma Wheeler Smith of South Lyon.

After a flurry of formal protests, Bouchard took the Senate floor to defend his work, arguing:

"It would take a local ordinance to permit malls to make such rules, 'taking in every mall, even malls that didn't have a problem or didn't want the solution. This allows it to be tailored specifically to everywhere there is a problem by the people who know if they have a problem —"

the people that own the property."

"Rather than violating civil rights, the bill 'respects the rights of the private property owners, the tenants and the people who pay huge amounts of rent.'"

"The bill is similar to curfews imposed by the city of Detroit during fireworks displays. It certainly has upheld the constitutionality of similar laws in Virginia and Georgia."

"This bill strikes at the heart of the Elliott-Larsen protection," said Sen. Alma Wheeler Smith. That law prohibits discrimination on the basis of age, race, gender and handicap. She said the Bouchard bill "targets for private police action" one protected group.

"This bill also gives a public police power to a private institution or a private entity," Smith said. She argued that Bouchard's comparison of the bill to Detroit's curfew was false because the action was by government accountable to the voters.

"To single out children under the age of 16 and say, 'You're bad because a handful are bad,' I think is a terrible mistake."

Sen. Henry Stallings, D-Detroit, said two of his under-16 daughters "are under 16 today and they are absolutely livid over this legislative body suggesting that they cannot go to Somerset or their favorite malls and shop on a Friday or Saturday, which is the optimum time for them. Their first response is, 'Dad, why are you doing this?'"

"I can't run in and out of every store with them, so I park myself on a little bench in the mall, and I let them go shopping. His bill will preclude them from being able to do that," said Stallings.

Sen. Jim Berryman, D-Adrian, an announced candidate for governor, addressed Lt. Gov. Connie Binsfeld, presiding officer in the Senate, saying, "Madame President, I know how personally you are. This piece of legislation is a slap in the face of every parent that has done a good job of raising kids. Strictly because they (kids) are under the age of 16, they are going to be banned if a particular mall should adopt this policy."

Refer to Senate Bill 494 when writing to your state representative, State Capitol, Lansing 48909.

Grants, contracts aid engineering research

A new series of grants and contracts from private and government sources will support the work of automotive researchers at Oakland University's School of Engineering and Computer Science (SECS), according to Dean Michael P. Polla.

"The School of Engineering and Computer Science has a well-earned reputation in the manufacturing and high-tech community for breakthrough innovation and leading-edge research," Dean Polla said. "These external funding awards will thrust automotive research at Oakland University into new direction."

SECS faculty and research

groups receiving private awards include:

■ Dr. Patrick Dessort, who was awarded \$48,000 from the Chrysler Corporation to teach a class for Chrysler employees titled "Systems Engineering Fundamentals, and;

■ The Michigan Center for Automotive Research, which was awarded \$800 from Matridyne, Inc. of Troy for research on obtaining small business innovation grants.

Faculty obtaining research contracts include:

■ Dessort, who was awarded a \$26,718 contract from the Chrysler Corporation to conduct "proof-of-concept" research

on warranty systems;

■ Dr. Subra Ganesan, who was awarded a \$26,718 contract from the Chrysler Corporation to research the use of microprocessors and micro controllers in automotive power trains;

■ Dr. Edward Y.L. Gu, who was awarded \$48,000 from General Motors Corporation's Research and Development Center to study robotic automotive painting systems;

■ Dr. Frank Cioch, who was awarded a \$24,980 contract from the United States Army's Tank-Automotive Command to develop new software for battle simulations; and;

■ Dr. Gary Barber, who was

awarded a \$5,000 contract from the Ford Motor Company to study relief of vibratory stress on transmission gears.

Oakland University is a comprehensive state-supported institution of higher education located in Rochester Hills. OU offers undergraduate programs in 71 areas and graduate programs in 45 areas. Dedicated to preparing learners for the 21st century workplace and society, the university is organized into the schools of Business Administration, Education and Human Services, Engineering and Computer Science, Health Sciences and Nursing.



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