

## Fire from page A1

"It's still an active case. I can't say anything more than that." The homeowner and an occupant of the house arrived after firefighters. A man who lives in the house said he had been there four hours earlier to retrieve messages from his answering machine. He locked both doors and left, reports said. He was staying at another

**■ He was staying at another address while work was being done on the wood-frame house.**

address while work was being done on the wood-frame house. No smoke detectors were found,

fire reports said.

The homeowner said he believed the dwelling is insured. Anyone with information is asked to call Farmington Hills police detective Ron Shankin at (248) 473-9658 or the Arson Hotline at 1-800-44-ARSON. Rewards of up to \$5,000 are offered for information that leads to an arson conviction.



Blaze: Firefighters finish extinguishing the house fire on Middlebelt Saturday night. Investigators believe the fire was deliberately set.

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## Bullard grilled by city council

BY LARRY O'CONNOR  
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State Sen. Willis Bullard faced a grilling by Farmington Hills City Council members, but he politely and firmly stood his ground.

Hills city officials have chastised state lawmakers for what they see as a continual erosion of local control. Bullard represents the 15th Senate District, which includes Farmington and Farmington Hills.

The Republican lawmaker

appeared unfazed by council members' criticism of recent bills.

At Monday's meeting, Bullard told council members he voted in favor of a bill that strips local governments of their power to grant or deny exit visas to businesses. Under state law, companies need approval when moving to another community to receive a tax break.

The purpose is to prevent cities from pirating corporations from other communities with the lure of tax incentives.

Troy refused to grant an exit visa to General Motors, which wanted to move part of its operations to nearby Warren. The city intends to give GM a tax abatement.

"I didn't think five council members should be able to hold up an investment in the city," Bullard said.

Council members Vicki Barnett and Jerry Ellis argued that when another city abates taxes, it includes money that goes to the county, community colleges and other tax authorities.

Such breaks also cut into the school aid fund, which has to be made up by taxpayers in other cities. Tax revenue from jobs created and business activity should help make up the difference, Bullard said.

He also noted state revenue is up 7 percent, a sign of a robust economy.

"If business is doing so well in the state, why does it need so many abatements?" Barnett asked.

That's part of the way business decisions are made, Bullard said.

He refused to consider council members' suggestion to propose a bill to close a loophole abating taxes to the school aid fund.

"I don't think I'm inclined to introduce that bill," Bullard said. "I don't support it and I don't think it has a chance of being passed. I don't think it's a worthwhile effort to focus our attention on that."

Bullard doesn't support House Bill 4777, which Vagnozzi and other Hills officials have spoken out against as an attack on home rule. The state Senator said he's against prevailing wage standards, which prompted the legislation.

Voters in Detroit approved setting a prevailing wage for jobs involving city contracts.

Vagnozzi asked Bullard how many times the state Legislature is going to overturn an election in Detroit. The state also removed Detroit's elected school board.

"There's an old saying Mister Mayor that sometimes you forget about principle and do what's right," Bullard said. "That's what we've been doing lately in the state Legislature."

### Comedians to raise money

The comedians of Detroit are pulling together to raise money for a remarkable woman comic, Farmington's own Alice Faye, who has lung cancer.

At 8 p.m. on Tuesday, Oct. 26, Mark Ridley's Comedy Castle, 269 E. 4th St., Royal Oak will host a benefit featuring the best of Detroit's comedians and Totally Unrehearsed Theater. Admission is \$10 or as much as a customer would like to donate.

On Wednesday, Oct. 27, Joey's Comedy Club in Livonia will host a benefit featuring Detroit's top comedians. Kirk Noland from Joey's has been gathering auction and raffle items from comedians and television shows.

Donations can be made to the Alice Faye Fund in honor of Brian and Nicholas, in care of the Providence Hospital Foundation, 32265 Greenfield, Suite 225, Southfield MI 48076. Call 424-5744.

For more information, call Mark Ridley's Comedy Castle at 542-9900 or Joey's Comedy Club at 784-261-0555.

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