

# County's donation to state is on the climb once again

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Every man, woman and child living in Oakland County donates more than \$700 a year to residents who live elsewhere in Michigan, according to the latest figures available.

Actually, the figure is likely to be higher today — \$715 was amount donated per capita in 1997. And it has been climbing. In 1995-96, it was \$631; in 1994-95, \$510.

Oakland County's per capita donation to the State of Michigan was at its highest in 1993-94, \$963, but despite a dip the following year, the figure is climbing again, according to figures compiled recently by the Department of Management and Budget and Senate Fiscal Agency.

"It's alarming," said Sen. Shirley Johnson (R-Royal Oak). "We recognize because of Oakland County's size, we have to subsidize the state to some degree, and we are very willing to do so, but it gets to the point it is rather absurd."

Tempera flared last year during the state's legislative budget setting process over the degree of Oakland County's donation.

## STATE NEWS

Among those most vocally critical of the disparity were Oakland County Executive L. Brooks Patterson and Rep. Bob Gosselin (R-Troy).

But many lawmakers, including those in the Oakland County delegation, believed the figures offered for the amount of the donation were incorrect and the state agencies were asked to provide corrected numbers.

The agencies concluded Oakland County has almost 12 percent of the state's population, ranking it as the second largest county in Michigan. Adjusted gross incomes are high here, \$54,633 as of 1996, compared to the state average for incomes of \$42,260. That makes Oakland County's incomes the highest in the state.

Nonetheless, when it comes to contributions to state revenue, taxes from Oakland County residents made up 19.25 percent of the state budget and they got back only 8.16 percent of state expenditures, according to the two fiscal agencies.

Per person, Oakland residents sent off to Lansing \$2,731 and got back in services only \$2,016

in the last year for which all the numbers are available, 1997.

Brian O'Connell, aide to Sen. Johnson, said the leadership in Lansing is typically unsympathetic, and reacts to such complaints as if Oakland residents are "spoiled."

When the Oakland delegation seeks increased spending, they are typically "outflanked" by lawmakers from other areas, and infighting among county lawmakers when it comes to appropriations has left them with little way to on this issue in the budgeting process.

Johnson said she plans to take the information to senate leaders this year as the budget process begins.

Representatives have elicited promises from House leadership and the governor's office to review the concerns in the coming budget rewrite.

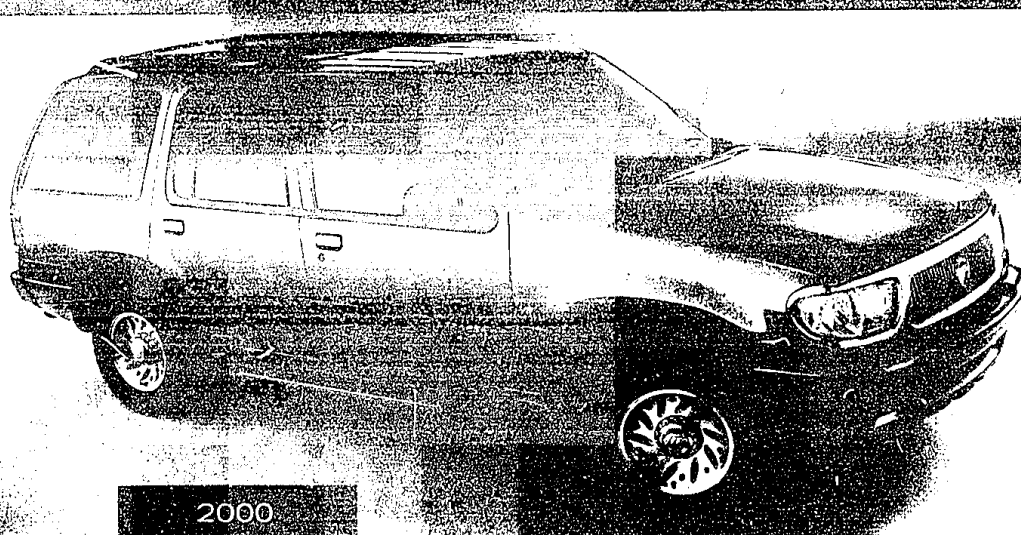
House Appropriations Chair Terry Geiger (R-Lake Odessa) has indeed agreed to discuss the matter with Oakland lawmakers. But he says he'd prefer to talk about specific needs. Roads in Oakland County need more money, he agreed, as do Oakland schools.



## Holiday help

Come and claim it: Farmington Department of Public Safety Officer Frank E. Barthel continues stolen property recovered during the past holiday season. If you recognize your missing Wise Man, come by the station and pick him up. Efforts are under way to locate the rightful owners of the items, which recently were stolen and wound up on a front yard on Hillside Ct. The case is being considered a prank, said Cmdr. Maria Putt.

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