

Granholm carves new ground for Democrat

Last week, Gov. Jennifer Granholm delivered the most painful budget message heard in Michigan in many, many years.

She proposed balancing the estimated \$17 billion budget deficit for the fiscal year that begins in October by cutting \$937 million in state spending and proposing around \$400 million each in new revenues (increasing the tax on diesel fuel, for example) and accounting maneuvers.

The big winners: Public schools (the \$6,700 per-pupil foundation grant will be retained) and early childhood education. The big losers: universities and community colleges (a 6.5-percent cut), graduating high school seniors (\$2,500 college merit scholarships for those who did well on the MEAP test will be cut to \$500) and state employees (\$250 million in negotiated wage and benefit increases were zeroed out of the budget).

Legislative and media reaction was generally admiring. Granholm did the run-up to her budget message in a spectacularly effective series of show-and-tell performances around the state. And her overall tough approach — "The days of spending beyond our means are over," she said in an unusual personal appearance before the House and Senate appropriations committees — won praise from Democrats and Republicans alike.

Upon reflection, three things stand out. First, Granholm may wind up carving entirely new ground for a Democratic politician.

Her predecessor, Republican John Engler, had an entirely different style — aggressively blunt and determinedly non-inclusive. And during the last years in office, Engler tried to do an impossible balancing act, simultaneously cutting taxes, increasing spending and finding all kinds of accounting gimmicks to balance the budget.

Granholm wants to "build a government that is lean, not mean." She says that at times of budget crisis a government cannot be "do everything for everybody and that tough-minded decisions must be made about spending priorities. For a Democrat to be a budget hawk is a new approach. Perhaps Granholm's is dictated by the stringency of the times, but I wouldn't be surprised if it really works.

Second, nobody should assume this budget is going to solve all our problems. It's based on lots

of assumptions — attitudes of state employee unions, saving money by diverting some prisoners to less expensive drug treatment plans, closing loopholes like transfer taxes on property sales — that may not pan out. The economy could fall into full-blown recession. The inevitable legislative and lobbying arm-twisting has yet to take place.

Moreover, the fact is that the state faces something like a \$1 billion "structural budget deficit" that will dominate budget discussions for years to come. As the widely respected Citizen's Research Council pointed out in a report issued last year, the combination of tax cuts over the past decade and relatively high expectations for state services have resulted in budgets that are intrinsically unbalanced unless something fundamental is done. This debate has yet to take place, but it surely will.

Third, Granholm is coming awfully close to inflicting real, long-term damage to one of Michigan's greatest long-term competitive advantages — our high-quality state universities and the research and development efforts they support. Support for higher education has now been cut by something like 10 percent over the past two budget years. This is the biggest cut since the recession in the early 1980s.

To her credit, Granholm said the higher education cuts were the most painful part of her budget. But she also said quite clearly that, "Higher education is not as critical as making sure a child is ready to go to college in the first place."

The fact remains that massive budget cuts for universities can do an awful lot of damage in a very short time, damage that takes many years to repair. Students and families will inevitably get hit with big tuition increases, not to mention the loss of \$2,500 college scholarships. Universities will have to cut courses, increase class sizes, reduce library and computer facilities and do all the things that save money but likely cut quality.

What keeps Michigan distinctive and fuels our economy and the prosperity of our citizens is the aggregate excellence of our investments in human and intellectual capital.

Gov. Granholm and the Legislature need to be especially thoughtful about the long-term consequences as they come to closure on this part of the budget.

Phil Power is chairman of the board of the company that owns this newspaper. He would be pleased to get your reactions to this column either at (734) 953-2047 or at ppower@homejournal.net.

Store owner's joke on duct tape tickles funny bone

There's an old Mark Twain quote that basically says "We are really funny." That came to mind recently when the manager of a Garden City hardware store started joking about duct tape.

He was being asked if his store was selling more duct tape and plastic sheeting than usual because of warnings issued by the Office of Homeland Security.

The manager said they were selling more duct tape than usual, but that there was enough in the store, and chances were they wouldn't run out.

Then he let loose with a joke about the possibility that the director of Homeland Security was a stockholder in duct tape or in hardware stores.

The joke was a welcomed relief, a break from talking about terrorism at home, a war with Iraq, rising gas prices and a cool winter. For me, it was reassurance that, as Twain said, "We are pretty funny."

A co-worker of mine had his own take on duct tape on the home front: "If life depends on duct tape, plastic sheeting and canned food, I don't want it."

For me, the duct tape warnings took me back to the 1950s, when people were building bomb shelters in their yards, and we had air raid drills in school. We would be taken into the school's musty basement and sit there until the drill was over.

For years I've read that children in the 1950s grew up under a mushroom cloud of fear of nuclear attack. That may have been how journalists wrote about it, but for us kids the drills were a break from the tedium of spelling tests and other classroom work. They were a time to see our friends and make jokes.

I don't even know how serious our teachers took the drills. Many of the men were World War II veterans. They knew that huddling in the basement of Calvin Coolidge Grade School on Detroit's west side probably wasn't much of a defense against an atomic attack.

My own father was a World War II Navy veteran who was someplace in the Pacific waiting to help invade Japan when the nuclear age was launched when the U.S. dropped nuclear bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

I guessed that helped him keep a sense of humor during the 1950s, when some neighborhoods were building a bomb shelter on an empty lot. Being an old farmer himself, he

For years I've read that children in the 1950s grew up under a mushroom cloud of fear of nuclear attack. That may have been how journalists wrote about it, but for us kids the drills were a break from the tedium of spelling tests and other classroom work. They were a time to see our friends and make jokes.

wondered why the neighbors were using land for a bomb shelter and not a garden. He pretty much considered it a waste. I suspect he knew exactly what an atomic bomb would do.

As it turned out, the bomb shelter was a great place for kids to play. It was our fort when we played army war games, a secret clubhouse when we needed to hide away from our parents and a good place to rendezvous when we became interested in girls.

The only thing that did frighten me as a child were the shades in my bedroom. I was raised in an old house on Detroit's west side, not far from the Ford Rouge complex. The shades were thick and dark green and wouldn't let any light in.

In a way they were great. I could sleep in and not have the sunlight wake me. For a long time, I thought that my parents had been so kind that they installed the shades so I could sleep late. That's the kind of thing you think in childhood.

But later I learned that they were blackout shades left over from World War II, when the Detroit area could have been a target of German or Japanese attacks. I envisioned grainy black and white film images of planes dropping bombs on innocent people or cartoon-like German officers in leather boots stomping on small children.

I was relieved I wasn't alive during World War II and that I didn't have to huddle in my room afraid of bombs falling.

Perhaps that's why I was relieved when the hardware store manager made a joke about duct tape. It's the new incarnation of the blackout shades in my old bedroom and I needed a little comic relief.

Jeff Courts is a semi-retired journalist who thinks duct tape is a cure-all for anything in the house.



Jeff Courts



Phil Power



Jeff Courts



Phil Power



Jeff Courts



More reasons to come out & play at Casino Windsor!

The days may be cold and short, but the action is always hot, and with three great promotions, long on value at Casino Windsor. Beat the winter blues by heading to Casino Windsor where the U.S. currency exchange gets you more play time and more chances to win. We're just a few minutes away, but works apart in comfort and style. Heat things up with these great promotions.

Triple Cash Back - February 3rd - March 31st

Players Prestige™ Slot Club members always earn Cash Back, but now you can earn three times as much for points earned on slot play. Weekdays from 3 p.m. - 3 a.m. Feb. 3rd - March 31st.

Vegas-Style Entertainment in the Showtime™ Lounge!

A REALLY HOT SHOW: Starring Jerry Hoban as Ed Sullivan - MAR. 11th - APR. 5th
 TRIBUTE: A salute to the superstars - APR. 15th - MAY 10th
 Tickets for these great shows are just \$10 U.S. Call 1-800-991-8888 to order tickets.

Get More Play Time for your U.S. dollar!

Exchanging your U.S. currency gives you more cash in your pocket, more play time and more chances to win. Exchange rates fluctuate daily, but over the last year have averaged approximately 96%. That means for every \$1.00 you exchange, you receive \$1.96!

Win your share of \$60,000 Cash!

Sign up for any one of our fun and exciting every five slot tournaments. Our next tournament is May 15th and costs just \$330™/\$225* to enter. Register by calling 258-7878, or visit us for more information.

Luxury for less - room rates just \$65^{US}

Enjoy a midweek getaway (Sun-Thurs) in our world-class four-diamond hotel for 845 U.S. Book early - limited availability. This great room rate is available until March 31, 2003. Rates are per night, plus taxes, double occupancy.

10X ODDS ON CRAPS

It's the hottest game in town and 10 times odds makes it sizzle.

Only Casino Windsor can take the most exciting game around and make it even better. 10X Odds on Craps only at Casino Windsor.

For information on these and other reasons why you should visit Casino Windsor this winter call 1-800-991-7777.

CASINO WINDSOR

www.casinowindsor.com

Find new decorating ideas each Thursday in At Home

It's Here! It's Huge!

It's Unheard Of! Do NOT Miss It...

GRANT

BLOWOUT SALE OF THE YEAR!! EVERYTHING MUST GO

TWO WEEKENDS IN THE SAME MONTH! SATURDAYS AND SUNDAYS MARCH 15, 16, 29, 30 10 AM - 6 PM

THE FINEST QUALITY FURNITURE BY FAMOUS MAKERS AT REMARKABLE SAVINGS... CHECK IT OUT!

- 4 Piece Leather Sectional with Chaise \$2,160
- Tan Micro Fiber Sofa, Loveseat, Chair & Ottoman \$1,511
- Complete King & Queen Size Giorgio & Excelsior Bedroom Sets King or Queen Bed, 2 Night Stands, Dresser, Mirror & Armoire regardless of Original Price All from \$3,899 to \$6,999
- Dining Room Set with Buffet, Extension Table & 6 Chairs regardless of Original Price All from \$2,499 to \$6,999
- Wall Units - Media Centers - Large & Small regardless of Original Price All from \$699 to \$4,999
- Large Selection of Dining Room Chairs - Both Arms & Sides regardless of Original Price Each from \$89 to \$149

PLUS... A HUGE Selection of Odds & Ends Tables, Sofas, Loveseats, Sectionals, Curios, China's & Desks All At UNBELIEVABLE Prices!!!

AND DURING THIS SALE ONLY...

SHERWOOD OFFERS FREE DELIVERY (WITHIN 30 MILES)
 SHERWOOD WILL PAY YOUR SALES TAX 0%...
 SHERWOOD WILL GIVE YOU 1 YEAR SAME AS CASH!

SHERWOOD STUDIOS WAREHOUSE
 24760 Crestview Court • Farmington Hills

(248) 476-3760

Groups Sold as Complete Sets Only
 Immediate Delivery
ALL SALES FINAL