

Aid To High-Tax Schools Vetoed; State Reps Debate It

An Observer Roundup

Three Observers school districts will miss out on a total of \$914,900 in state aid as a result of Gov. Milliken's veto last week of a section of the recently-passed state school aid bill.

Most area districts will be unaffected by Milliken's three line item vetoes. Of primary importance was his rejection of a section which would have provided property tax relief for more than 40 high-millage districts.

The plan was inserted as a compromise in the House of Representatives to gain support from several suburban Detroit Democrats who threatened to withhold vital support for the Democrat-backed bill.

It would have allowed districts levying more than 30 mills for school operations to reduce their tax levies by one-fourth of the difference between their actual levy and 30 mills. To cover that revenue loss, they would be reimbursed by the state.

Wayne-Westland School District was hardest hit in the state by the veto, which will cost it \$635,100 in anticipated revenue. Redford Union will lose \$210,200, and Clarenceville \$69,600.

In his veto message, the governor said the tax relief provision was "not consistent with the spirit of the bill," which he said "will bring quality and equality in education throughout Michigan—regardless of wealth of the district."

Milliken said the vetoed sections "could have made a mockery of the Legislature's efforts 'at equality in school financing, and would jeopardize his tax cut program."

State Rep. R. Robert Geake (R-Northville), whose district includes parts of the Livonia and Clarenceville school systems, agreed with the governor's actions.

Geake said the proposal "would not have brought any more education. It simply substitutes state dollars for local dollars."

"The total of \$8.23 million saved by Gov. Milliken's three vetoes will help keep total state budgets in balance and thus protect the property tax relief act passed earlier this year," said Geake.

"Some will complain that the veto hurt their school districts, but it is important to remember that the vetoed sections helped entire school districts while the tax relief act helps those individuals most over-burdened by income and property taxes."

State Rep. John Markes (D-Westland), who was instrumental in working out the compromise, said he was "a bit shocked" by the governor's action.

Much of Markes' district is in the Livonia system, but approximately 1/5 is within the Wayne-Westland School District.

"The bill was an attempt to realistically approach the problem of districts that had realistically met their obligations and responsibilities by voting millages," said Markes. "I find there are some inconsistencies in thinking and perhaps in the advice the governor got in considering his veto."

"We all talk about some kind of property tax relief, and certainly vetoing something that would have accom-

plished it is inconsistent. I can't understand that reversal of attitude.

"I have to think it was the advice he was given, and that he was given bad advice."

"Now we know where we stand," he said. "Those of us who supported it have taken our stand for property tax relief."

Milliken recommended modification of the section, saying that it "goes much further" than intended, and "provides substantial increases to school districts that have raised their millage rates...and to others that have not received state aid in the past...."

The third veto was the first year of a three-year program of state subsidy to low millage districts to defray their tax levies for construction and debt retirement.

Milliken said the measure was "desirable" but that cost estimates would exceed original estimates by several million dollars, making the measure one the state "can ill afford."

Under the bill as signed by the governor, Observersland district's state aid per pupil will be as follows:

Garden City—\$307.29 in state aid added to a local appropriation of \$311.56 for a total of \$618.85 per pupil.

Westland—\$265.93 state aid and \$532.28 locally for a total of \$798.21 per pupil.

Redford Union—\$396.55 state aid and \$57.62 locally for a total of \$454.17 per pupil.

South Redford—\$34.35 state aid and \$94.48 locally for a total of \$128.83 per pupil.

Plymouth—\$191.81 state aid and \$766.17 locally for a total of \$957.98 per pupil.

Southfield—\$49.08 state aid and \$1,023.52 locally for a total of \$1,072.60 per pupil.

Farmington—\$313.02 state aid and \$617.07 locally for a total of \$930.09 per pupil.

Clarenceville—\$347.84 state aid and \$225.18 locally for a total of \$573.02 per pupil.

The figures are based on data furnished to the state Department of Education by local school superintendents.

Another strong supporter of the provision, State Rep. Robert Bennett (D-Redford Township), described Milliken's stance as "a fraud upon the people."

"Everytime you try something different up here they call you fiscally irresponsible," Bennett charged. "I want to put the governor on notice that we'll keep putting this in there until he doesn't veto it. If this is not the answer, then he should suggest something better instead of making political statements about equality of education. This is equality of failure."

"They've helped everyone else, but the high millage districts are the ones that are being hurt."

Several Observersland high school students are among a group of young people attending the annual national conference for Junior Achievers being held through Aug. 17 on the Bloomington campus of Indiana University.

Some 300 businessmen will join the young entrepreneurs for a week of group discussions and workshops on issues confronting the business world.

JA Meeting Draws Local Students

Observersland junior achievers attending the conference are: Farmington — Elizabeth and Marypat Abowd, both of whom are competing for a national award, and David Abowd, who is running for national JA president.

Southfield — Southfield-Lathrup graduate Larry Simon.

Livonia — Riek Bastianelli and Glen Kaitlein, both Stevenson High School students.

Westland — Divine Child graduate Marialana Branch.

Garden City — John Russell, Garden City East graduate.

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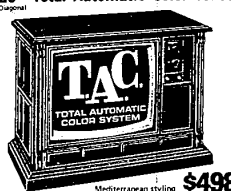
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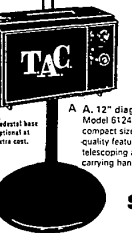
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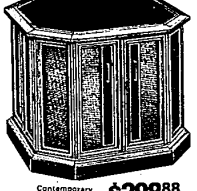
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