

MICHIGAN
CAPITOL CONFIDENTIAL

A publication
of the
Mackinac Center
for Public Policy

A review of the votes and proposals of the Michigan Legislature — Vol. 2, No. 1 — January/February 2008

CORNY ENERGY PLANS

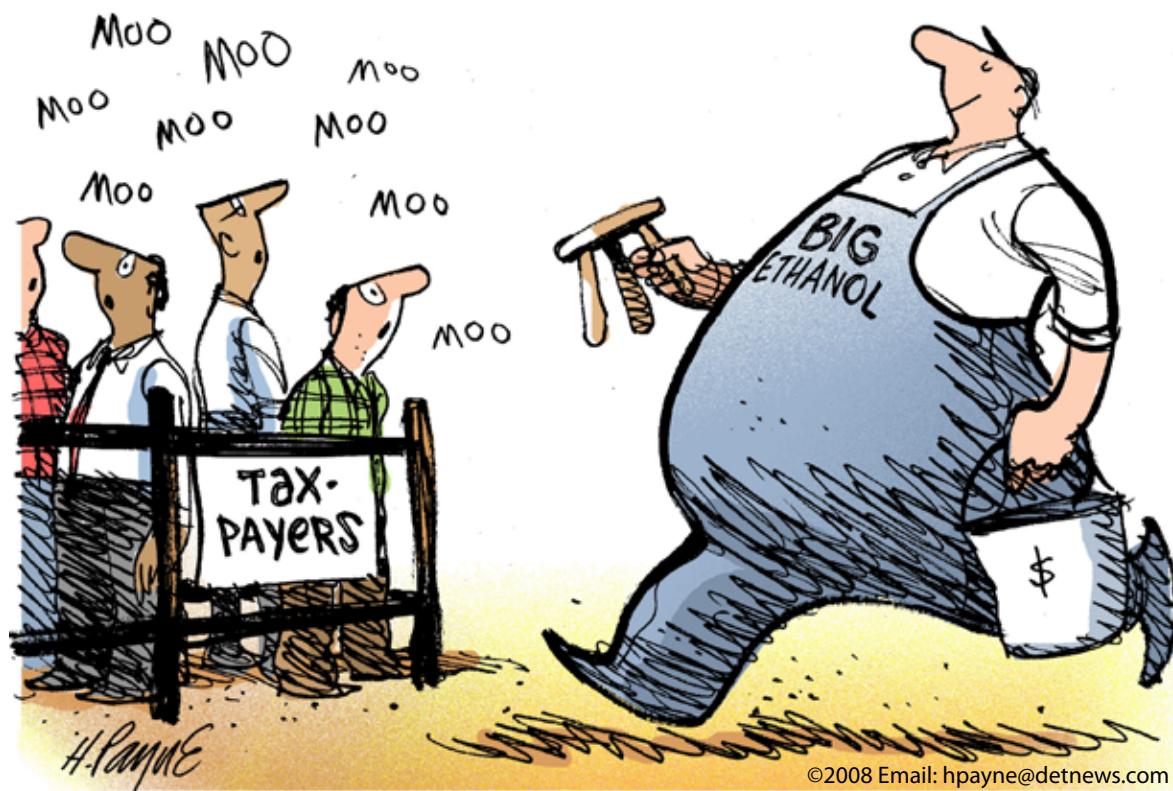
State politicians ratify ethanol incentives

Michigan lawmakers are plowing forward with legislation that would expand tax breaks for producers of ethanol and other crop-based fuels. House Bill 5100 would amend a 2006 law that authorized substantial tax breaks for “renewable energy facilities,” so that it will explicitly include crop-based fuel production facilities such as ethanol or bio-diesel plants. On Oct. 3, 2007, the Michigan House of Representatives approved the bill on a vote of 108-0. A committee of the state Senate unanimously approved the bill on Nov. 13 and presented it to the full Senate for consideration.

Despite this consensus within state government, there is strong evidence that preferential tax treatment for ethanol producers in the United States is neither an efficient energy strategy nor a sound environmental policy, and that it is producing a needless increase in food prices.

A U.S. Department of Agriculture study in 2005 concluded that the wholesale cost to produce a gallon of corn-based ethanol was \$2.53. In January 2007, Jerry Taylor and Peter Van Doren of the Cato Institute in Washington, D.C., stated that this is “several times what it costs to produce a

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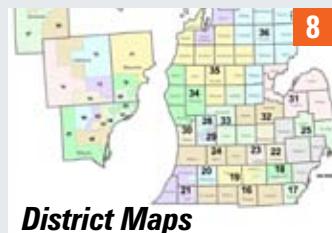


E-energy Conscious

Sweet Home Alabama



District Maps



THE YEAR OF LIVING EXPENSIVELY

State spending hits record high

The Michigan Senate Fiscal Agency expects that state government spending from all sources for fiscal 2008 will be \$42.8 billion — the highest annual state spending in Michigan history and a \$937.6 million increase over the previous fiscal year. The vast majority of this additional spending is possible because of the \$1.358 billion tax hike approved by Michigan lawmakers and the governor last fall. However, despite an agreement to cut \$433 million in spending if higher taxes were approved, and dire warnings of “massive cuts” if the taxes were not raised, only seven of the 17 appropriation bills enacted for 2008 carry

a smaller price tag than what was originally enacted for the previous budget year.

The discrepancy between promised cuts and the reality of \$937.6 million in additional spending can be explained by the phrase “current services budget.” Simply put, this is the government assumption that the current year’s budget should provide everything the previous year’s budget did and do it much the same way, with whatever dollars are necessary to get it done. For the most part, no allowance is made for identifying and eliminating needless services or finding more efficient ways to provide services through the use of privatization and other efficiencies.

Once this price of “current services” is calculated for the next fiscal year, nearly all deviations downward are defined as a “cut,” even though total spending increases. For example, lawmakers and the governor agreed to “cut” \$55.6 million from the current services budget for the Department

See “Living Expensively,” Page 5

SPECIAL INTERESTS

No Good Deed Unpunished

Secretary of state’s smart spending questioned

Some frugal government has quietly brewed amidst the state budgets of the last half-dozen years; the Michigan secretary of state implemented a plan that reduced the cost and number of its branch offices while improving service. The plan is referred to not as “downsizing,” but optimistically as modernization. However, a proposal to continue down this lower-cost road was targeted during the 2008 budget process.

Funding for secretary of state branch offices has increased by less than half the rate of inflation from fiscal 2000 through 2007, and total staffing declined 6.1 percent. There were 173

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ENERGY PLANS

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gallon of gasoline.” Even before adding on federal and state gas taxes, this was already within hailing distance of the historically high retail price of gasoline that we were paying at the pumps at the end of 2007. Taylor and Van Doren also quote another source that estimated that the federal subsidy for each gallon of ethanol is \$1.05 to \$1.38 – or roughly half of its wholesale production cost – while the comparable figure for petroleum subsidies is 3 cents per gallon.

And what is worse, ethanol also contains substantially less energy per gallon than gasoline. A study published in the Fall 2007 issue of Regulation magazine revealed that E85 “flex-fuel” vehicles, using ethanol-gasoline blends, get 20 percent to 30 percent worse mileage than if they used gasoline only.

Goodell quotes a University of Minnesota study that estimates that 450 pounds of corn – enough to feed one person for a year – is needed to fill just one SUV gas tank with pure ethanol.

As a global warming remedy, ethanol also falls short – even by the standards of those who blame fossil fuel burning for climate change. Jeff Goodell of Rolling Stone magazine is one such critic. He writes in the June 24, 2007, issue, “Ethanol doesn’t burn cleaner than gasoline.” In fact, he continues, corn-ethanol burns “as dirty as conventional gasoline and does little to solve global warming.” Also, ironically, “Corn production depends on huge amounts of fossil fuel – not just the diesel needed to plow fields and transport crops, but also vast quantities of natural gas used to produce fertilizers.”

Growing corn for fuel also displaces human food and water consumption. Criticizing federal subsidies on Oct. 17, 2007, a Wall Street Journal editorial opined that corn-based ethanol was “absurdly inefficient” and had “already driven up food prices.” Regarding water consumption, The Journal noted a study that reveals that making a gallon of ethanol requires “a staggering 1,700 gallons of H₂O.” Because of this massive agricultural drain, ethanol promises little in the way of replacing the present U.S. need for oil imports. The editorial cites Science magazine, which recently published an estimate showing that just getting 10 percent of our motor fuel from ethanol would require dedicating 43 percent of American cropland to only that purpose.

The Regulation magazine article postulates that if every single ear of corn now grown on U.S. soil were devoted to ethanol, it would replace only 3.5 percent of American gasoline requirements. But even the comparatively modest diversions right now are already taking a toll. The director of the Michigan Department of Agriculture said this past summer that Michigan ethanol production was causing corn prices to climb for Michigan-based cereal maker Kellogg. Goodell of Rolling Stone reports that some U.S. hog farmers have switched from corn to “trail mix, french fries, and chocolate bars” as cheaper alternatives to fatten up their pigs. Putting the tradeoff in perspective, Goodell quotes a University of Minnesota study that estimates that 450 pounds of corn – enough to feed one person for a year – is needed to fill just one SUV gas tank with pure ethanol.

The MichiganVotes.org tally for the bill that authorizes tax breaks for ethanol production appears to the right. ■

A different perspective on ethanol is provided on Page 3 in the “Alternative Views.”

Check MichiganVotes.org

Legislators who voted IN FAVOR of ethanol incentives:

2007 House roll call vote 447 on House Bill 5100

HOUSE REPUBLICANS (50)

Acciavatti (R)	Caul (R)	Huizenga (R)	Moolenaar (R)	Pavlov (R)	Stakoe (R)
Agema (R)	DeRoche (R)	Hune (R)	Moore (R)	Pearce (R)	Steil (R)
Amos (R)	Elsenheimer (R)	Jones, Rick (R)	Moss (R)	Proos (R)	Walker (R)
Ball (R)	Emmons (R)	Knollenberg (R)	Nitz (R)	Robertson (R)	Ward (R)
Booher (R)	Gaffney (R)	LaJoy (R)	Nofs (R)	Rocca (R)	Wenke (R)
Brandenburg (R)	Green (R)	Law, David (R)	Opsommer (R)	Schuitmaker (R)	
Calley (R)	Hansen (R)	Marleau (R)	Palmer (R)	Shaffer (R)	
Casperson (R)	Hildenbrand (R)	Meekhof (R)	Palsrok (R)	Sheen (R)	
Caswell (R)	Horn (R)	Meltzer (R)	Pastor (R)	Stahl (R)	

HOUSE DEMOCRATS (58)

Accavitti (D)	Clemente (D)	Espinoza (D)	Johnson (D)	Meadows (D)	Smith, Virgil (D)
Angerer (D)	Condino (D)	Farrah (D)	Jones, Robert (D)	Meisner (D)	Spade (D)
Bauer (D)	Constan (D)	Gillard (D)	Lahti (D)	Melton (D)	Tobocman (D)
Bennett (D)	Corriveau (D)	Gonzales (D)	Law, Kathleen (D)	Miller (D)	Vagnozzi (D)
Bieda (D)	Coulouris (D)	Griffin (D)	LeBlanc (D)	Polidori (D)	Valentine (D)
Brown (D)	Cushingberry (D)	Hammel (D)	Leland (D)	Sak (D)	Warren (D)
Byrnes (D)	Dean (D)	Hammon (D)	Lemmons (D)	Scott (D)	Wojno (D)
Byrum (D)	Dillon (D)	Hood (D)	Lindberg (D)	Sheltrown (D)	Young (D)
Cheeks (D)	Donigan (D)	Hopgood (D)	Mayes (D)	Simpson (D)	
Clack (D)	Ebli (D)	Jackson (D)	McDowell (D)	Smith, Alma (D)	

Legislators who voted AGAINST ethanol incentives:

2007 House roll call vote 447 on House Bill 5100

HOUSE REPUBLICANS (NONE)

HOUSE DEMOCRATS (NONE)

Legislators who DID NOT VOTE:

Garfield (R) Hoogendyk (R)

WHY WE GIVE PARTY AFFILIATIONS:

The Legislature is managed as a partisan institution. Lawmakers segregate themselves by party in matters from daily meetings to seating. They have separate and taxpayer-financed policy staffs to provide them with research and advice from differing perspectives. As such, gaining a full understanding of the vote of an individual lawmaker requires knowing his or her partisan affiliation.

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Michigan Capitol Confidential is published bimonthly by the Mackinac Center for Public Policy, a nonprofit, nonpartisan, tax-exempt research and educational organization devoted to analyzing Michigan public policy issues. Michigan Capitol Confidential is distributed to Michigan residents who have expressed an interest in public policy matters, as well as members of the media and lawmakers and policy staff in the Michigan House, Michigan Senate and Office of the Governor. All rights reserved. Permission to excerpt or reprint is hereby granted provided that Michigan Capitol Confidential, the author and the Mackinac Center for Public Policy are properly cited.

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ALTERNATIVE VIEWS

Sen. Kahn Drives His Ethanol-Powered Car to Senate Session



Editor's note: The following is a merging of two very similar press releases issued on July 13 and 24, 2007, by state Sen. Roger Kahn. Both releases referenced Sen. Kahn's ethanol-fueled car and the construction of a new ethanol plant. Redundancies between the two messages have been omitted so as to create a single, complete statement. Otherwise, the statements appear in their entirety.

State Sen. Roger Kahn drove this new ethanol-fueled Chevy Impala to the Capitol [on July 24, 2007] for Senate session. Kahn's vehicle runs on E85, an 85 percent blend of ethanol, a renewable energy source.

"It's a great feeling to ride to work in a vehicle that not only represents energy independence but supports our local economy as well," said Kahn, R-Saginaw. "As we anticipate the construction of the state's largest producer of renewable resources, in Ithaca, it makes good sense to promote the value of renewable resources while encouraging the creation of jobs in the community."

Kahn recently spoke at an event welcoming Liberty Renewable Fuels and its building contractors to Gratiot County as they prepare to start construction on Michigan's largest ethanol plant. Numerous Michigan contractors will join lead builder ICM on construction of the project. In addition to the estimated 400 construction workers needed

to build the plant, 46 permanent jobs will be created for operation and support of the facility.

"Today is a great day for the people of Gratiot County," said Kahn, R-Saginaw Township, [on July 13, 2007]. "This plant will have a significant impact on both short- and long-term jobs for mid-Michigan workers and support our local farmers by requiring 40 million bushels of corn each year to operate. This is a terrific achievement and I want to congratulate all parties involved on making this a reality."

Expected to be completed in the third quarter of 2008, the Ithaca ethanol plant will be Michigan's largest producer of renewable resources, producing 110 million gallons of ethanol annually. Additionally, the facility will generate 354,000 tons of distiller's grains for animal feed. Five million vehicles in the U. S. today are flexible fuel vehicles capable of running on a mix of 85 percent ethanol and 15 percent gasoline commonly called E85.

"I own an E85 Chevrolet Impala, and I encourage every Michigan resident to consider a renewable fuel vehicle when purchasing their next automobile," said Kahn. "Alternative fuels like ethanol represent a positive collaboration between Michigan's agricultural and automotive industries that will rejuvenate our struggling economy and take steps toward achieving America's goal of energy independence." ■

NOTES ON STATESMANSHIP

Good Government: Whose Duty Is It, Anyway?

By Lawrence W. Reed

In my travels around the state recently, it's become apparent to me that Michiganders are spending an increasing amount of time discussing these questions: Should we keep, modify or scrap term limits? Should we replace our full-time legislature with a part-time one?

To be sure, these are not inappropriate topics given the frustration many people have with Lansing these days. I have my own views on all these subjects. But by the same token, they deal with structural tinkering that dodge some really fundamental matters. They imply that the system is the problem, not the citizenry. I'm not running for anything, so I can afford to say right up front that "we the people" are more to blame for bad government than we ever admit.

What I'm saying is that we could tweak the structure till the cows come home, but if nothing else changed, you'd hardly notice a difference. Ultimately, people in a democratic republic get the government their opinions and actions (or inactions) naturally produce. Satirist and commentator H. L. Mencken once said that "Democracy is the theory that the common people know what they want, and deserve to get it good and hard." He also famously defined an election as "an advance auction of stolen goods." If politicians pander, it's because too many of our fellow citizens are pandorable.

A story in the July 15, 2001, New York Times Magazine provides me with a useful example of the typical panderer. It was about a son of the late Robert Kennedy, Max Kennedy, who was flirting at the time with

a run for office. The story recounted his ill-fated attempt at a stump speech riddled with trite one-liners like these: "I want to fight for all of you ... I'll commit myself heart and soul to be the kind of congressman who cares about you ... I'll dedicate myself to fighting for working families to have a fair chance ... I make you this one pledge: I will always be there for you."

"We the people" are more to blame for bad government than we ever admit.

Kennedy's handler pressed him repeatedly for a "take-away message," something of substance that his audience would remember. "What do you want people to take away from it?" he asked several different ways. The would-be candidate stammered and couldn't think of much other than, "I'm a nice guy," until finally he admitted: "I don't know. Whatever it has to be."

Max decided in the end not to run, but sadly, people elect such unprincipled know-nothings all the time. If our standards for supporting a candidate are so low, aren't we fools for expecting the winners to rise above them once in government? Leonard Read, founder of the Foundation for Economic Education, used to say that virtually no one "will fly higher in office than he flew to get there."

Think of your particular representative or senator. What real expertise did you insist he or she have when first running for office, or were you satisfied that just being a baby-kissing, smooth-talking schmoozer was sufficient qualification? If the campaign

brochure presented meaningless platitudes instead of substance, did you complain?

Do your representative and senator show evidence of ever reading anything besides their own press releases? Do they operate from a base of firm principles, courageously expressed and defended, or do they blow with the wind? Do they talk one way at home and vote another in Lansing or Washington, and if so, do you ever hold them accountable?

Do they ever get into a subject more deeply than a bumper sticker slogan? If not, do you ever call them on the carpet, or do you treat them deferentially, as if you work for them, instead of the other way around? If they actually do show depth, do you ever thank them for it?

Do they ever introduce legislation to repeal something, or do they show interest only in filling more law books? Do you ask them to pursue policies that make sense for everyone, or do you needle them to get you or your friends something special at other people's expense? If they exhibit questionable character, do you penalize them or re-elect them?

You get the point.

We all say we want more statesmanship and less politics-as-usual, but I suspect that statesmanship is something that bubbles up from the bottom. The quality of our representation springs from the standards on which you and I insist and rarely exceeds them. No one should ever expect politicians to exemplify virtues that those who elected them do not have themselves. ■

Lawrence W. Reed is president of the Mackinac Center for Public Policy.

MichiganVotes.org

Ten of 17 budget bills for fiscal 2008 spent more money than was enacted for those same budgets in fiscal 2007. The total additional spending over 2007 enacted law represented by these 10 bills was \$1,470,045,900. The amount of this total approved by each lawmaker is listed below.

The final passage votes for the following budget bills were used for this tabulation: Senate Bill 229, Senate Bills 232-235, House Bills 4344, 4346, 4348, 4350 and 4360. See MichiganVotes.org for a description of each bill and vote.

HOUSE REPUBLICANS

Acciavatti (R)	\$349,835,000	Elsenheimer (R)	\$45,100,000	Knollenberg (R)	\$154,100,000	Palmer (R)	\$116,500,000	Stakoe (R)	\$1,011,835,000
Agema (R)	\$136,945,900	Emmons (R)	\$1,291,045,900	LaJoy (R)	\$1,332,045,900	Palsrok (R)	\$1,350,045,900	Steil (R)	\$7,500,000
Amos (R)	\$480,045,900	Gaffney (R)	\$1,212,045,900	Law, David (R)	\$1,332,045,900	Pastor (R)	\$49,835,000	Walker (R)	\$371,045,900
Ball (R)	\$1,332,045,900	Garfield (R)	\$126,500,000	Marleau (R)	\$274,100,000	Pavlov (R)	\$165,100,000	Ward (R)*	\$1,219,835,000
Booher (R)	\$1,332,045,900	Green (R)	\$327,710,900	Meekhof (R)	\$372,445,900	Pearce (R)	\$164,335,000	Wenke (R) *	\$120,000,000
Brandenburg (R)	\$349,835,000	Hansen (R)	\$1,332,045,900	Meltzer (R)	\$174,310,900	Proos (R)	\$1,230,835,000		
Calley (R)	\$1,463,545,900	Hildenbrand (R)	\$121,000,000	Moolenaar (R)	\$1,332,045,900	Robertson (R)	\$967,500,000		
Casperson (R)	\$1,262,045,900	Hoogendyk (R)	\$7,500,000	Moore (R)	\$1,350,045,900	Rocca (R)	\$1,470,045,900		
Caswell (R)	\$864,235,000	Horn (R)	\$360,045,900	Moss (R)	\$410,045,900	Schuitmaker (R)	\$1,092,835,000		
Caul (R)	\$1,470,045,900	Huizenga (R)	\$442,445,900	Nitz (R)	\$1,160,835,000	Shaffer (R)	\$1,201,835,000		
DeRoche (R) *	\$127,500,000	Hune (R)	\$7,500,000	Nofs (R)	\$1,103,045,900	Sheen (R)	\$6,500,000		
		Jones, Rick (R)	\$410,045,900	Opsommer (R)	\$279,835,000	Stahl (R)	\$165,100,000		

HOUSE DEMOCRATS

Accavitti (D)	\$1,350,045,900	Condino (D)	\$1,470,045,900	Gonzales (D)	\$1,470,045,900	Leland (D)	\$1,350,045,900	Sheltrown (D)	\$1,470,045,900
Angerer (D)	\$1,470,045,900	Constan (D)	\$1,350,045,900	Griffin (D)	\$1,470,045,900	Lemmons (D)	\$1,470,045,900	Simpson (D)	\$1,332,045,900
Bauer (D)	\$1,350,045,900	Corriveau (D)	\$1,350,045,900	Hammel (D)	\$1,470,045,900	Lindberg (D)	\$1,325,545,900	Smith, Alma (D)	\$1,350,045,900
Bennett (D)	\$1,350,045,900	Coulouris (D)	\$1,350,045,900	Hammon (D)	\$1,470,045,900	Mayes (D)	\$1,470,045,900	Smith, Virgil (D)	\$1,470,045,900
Bieda (D)	\$1,350,045,900	Cushingberry (D)	\$1,470,045,900	Hood (D)	\$1,350,045,900	McDowell (D)	\$1,350,045,900	Spade (D)	\$1,470,045,900
Brown (D)	\$1,470,045,900	Dean (D)	\$1,350,045,900	Hopgood (D)	\$1,350,045,900	Meadows (D)	\$1,463,545,900	Tobocman (D)	\$1,350,045,900
Byrnes (D)	\$1,350,045,900	Dillon (D)	\$1,470,045,900	Jackson (D)	\$1,350,045,900	Meisner (D)	\$1,470,045,900	Vagnozzi (D)	\$1,350,045,900
Byrum (D)	\$1,350,045,900	Donigan (D)	\$1,350,045,900	Johnson (D)	\$1,350,045,900	Melton (D)	\$1,350,045,900	Valentine (D)	\$1,350,045,900
Cheeks (D)	\$1,350,045,900	Ebli (D)	\$1,350,045,900	Jones, Robert (D)	\$1,470,045,900	Miller (D)	\$1,211,045,900	Warren (D)	\$1,350,045,900
Clack (D)	\$1,470,045,900	Espinoza (D)	\$1,470,045,900	Lahti (D)	\$1,463,545,900	Polidori (D)	\$1,470,045,900	Wojno (D)	\$1,470,045,900
Clemente (D)	\$1,350,045,900	Farrah (D)	\$1,350,045,900	Law, Kathleen (D)	\$1,470,045,900	Sak (D)	\$1,343,545,900	Young (D)	\$1,350,045,900
		Gillard (D)	\$1,470,045,900	LeBlanc (D)	\$1,350,045,900	Scott (D)	\$1,350,045,900		

SENATE REPUBLICANS

Allen (R)	\$1,470,045,900	Jelinek (R)	\$1,470,045,900
Birkholz (R)	\$1,470,045,900	Kahn (R)	\$1,470,045,900
Bishop (R)	\$1,470,045,900	Kuipers (R)	\$1,470,045,900
Brown (R)	\$1,470,045,900	McManus (R)	\$1,470,045,900
Cassis (R)	\$217,600,000	Pappageorge (R)	\$1,470,045,900
Cropsey (R)	\$1,470,045,900	Patterson (R) *	\$330,235,000
Garcia (R)	\$1,470,045,900	Richardville (R)	\$1,332,045,900
George (R)	\$1,470,045,900	Sanborn (R) *	\$260,235,000
Gilbert (R)	\$1,339,835,000	Stamas (R)	\$1,470,045,900
Hardiman (R)	\$1,470,045,900	Van Woerkom (R)	\$1,470,045,900
Jansen (R)	\$1,470,045,900		

SENATE DEMOCRATS

Anderson (D)	\$1,350,045,900	Prusi (D)	\$1,205,545,900
Barcia (D)	\$1,339,835,000	Schauer (D)	\$1,350,045,900
Basham (D)	\$1,343,545,900	Scott (D)	\$1,350,045,900
Brater (D)	\$1,350,045,900	Switalski (D)	\$1,470,045,900
Cherry (D)	\$1,219,835,000	Thomas (D)	\$1,350,045,900
Clark-Coleman (D)	\$1,219,835,000	Whitmer (D)	\$1,219,835,000
Clarke (D)	\$1,350,045,900		
Gleason (D)	\$1,350,045,900		
Hunter (D)	\$1,350,045,900		
Jacobs (D)	\$1,350,045,900		
Olshove (D)	\$1,219,835,000		

*Notes: Rep. DeRoche, Rep. Ward and Sen. Patterson did not cast a final passage vote on two of the 10 budgets examined here. Sen. Sanborn missed one of 10. Rep. Wenke missed eight of 10.

LIVING EXPENSIVELY from Page One

of Corrections, but the reality for taxpayers is that the price tag for prisons in 2008 will be \$138 million more than what was originally enacted for 2007.

The alternative is to assume that some programs can be eliminated, that government need not do things the same expensive way every year, and that state workers may have to share in the state's economic hardships, rather than receive a raise like this year's \$150 million payroll increase. The real per-capita personal income of Michigan taxpayers fell by almost 1 percent from 2001 through 2006. According to the Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Growth, the average state civil service worker was paid 18 percent more than the average private-sector employee as recently as 2005. Is a raise for state workers in 2008 an essential service?

Mackinac Center Senior Legislative Analyst Jack McHugh points out that the 2008 budget contains only a few tiny real cost containments, such as closing four prisons, trimming arts funding and very modest outsourcing of foster and child adoption services. But he laments that the larger targets for "transformational" cost savings were not considered. Two examples he cites are prison privatization and devolving state police road patrols to less costly county sheriff's deputies.

Last fall, 114 lawmakers voted to approve at least \$1 billion of that extra spending, and 41 voted for it all.

McHugh asserts that neither liberals nor conservatives prefer overpriced prisons and police, so this budget is not an ideological battlefield. Rather, the real dispute is between taxpayers and the government employee unions whose interests are at stake if raises are not given, or if government jobs are outsourced to private-sector providers. While conceding that few

Michigan residents knew about it, McHugh recounts the "loud demonstrations, e-mail campaigns, and uncompromising letters" that these unions used to exert "powerful pressure" on lawmakers to raise taxes and increase spending. "When the governor announced her budget back in February," he writes, "public-sector union members in T-shirts were already handing out fliers supporting tax increases as an alternative to budget cuts." In short, public employee unions drove the process that led to record-setting budgets in 2008.

Capitol Details

**\$42.8
BILLION**

In 2008 Michigan government spending is expected to be at a historic high.

Source: Michigan Senate Fiscal Agency

As noted, 10 of 17 budget bills for 2008 appropriated more money than what was originally enacted for the previous budget year. The total spending increase for these 10 bills is \$1.47 billion. Of the 148 lawmakers in both chambers of the Legislature, 114 voted to approve at least \$1 billion of that extra spending, and 41 voted for it all. The name of each state lawmaker and the amount of spending above the previous year that they voted to approve from those 10 budget bills is in the box at left. ■

FOR FURTHER READING:

McHugh's analysis of the 2008 budget may be read in its entirety at www.mackinac.org/9122.

Cost-trimming alternatives to Michigan's prison spending are located at www.mackinac.org/8845 and at www.mackinac.org/7083.

A proposal that would save money in the state police budget may be found at www.mackinac.org/5949.

A comparison of state employee compensation to the private sector is located at www.mackinac.org/8207.

FISCAL FITNESS

Sweet Home Alabama

By Paul Kersey

There was a time when folks in Northern states like Michigan thought of Alabama as impoverished and backward: "I heard Mr. Young sing about her, I heard ol' Neil put her down," as Lynyrd Skynyrd sang. Now, Neil Young had excellent reasons to be critical of Alabama back in the early 1970s, before civil rights laws had had much effect in the South. But if experts and political leaders in Michigan take potshots at Alabama today, the words are bound to ring hollow, because Alabama's economy is poised to overtake Michigan's in the important task of providing opportunities for workers to find good jobs. Those of us who live and work in Michigan might want to set aside our Northern pride and learn from their example.

In the Mackinac Center's recent report, "The Economic Effect of Right-to-Work Laws: 2007," we described the numerous advantages that right-to-work states like Alabama have over non-right-to-work states, Michigan in particular. A state right-to-work law prevents workers from being forced to pay union dues or fees as a condition of employment, while leaving the rest of the labor law, including collective bargaining, intact. Our research showed that the economies of right-to-work states grew faster and created jobs at more than twice the rate of states that allowed forced unionism. Naturally, with so many jobs being created, right-to-work states had lower unemployment.

The one advantage that non-right-to-work states have held is in incomes. The average per-capita personal income for right-to-work states is \$2,400 lower than for states that allow forced

dues, leading union officials and other forced-union-dues advocates to deride right-to-work as "right-to-work-for-less." But they neglect to mention that right-to-work states have been gaining over the last five years, especially when compared to Michigan. The right-to-work states of Florida, Kansas, Nebraska, Nevada, Texas, Virginia and Wyoming have higher disposable incomes than Michigan today. If the trend of the last five years holds, a



(AP Photo/Rob Carr)

majority of right-to-work states will have higher per-capita personal incomes than Michigan by 2010, at which point Michigan will be the real right-to-work-for-less state. Alabama overtakes Michigan in 2011.

Michigan no longer compares well with Alabama, "where the skies are so blue," and where the auto industry is flourishing. While GM and Ford slashed their payrolls, automakers in Alabama were building new plants and creating jobs. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, between 2001 and 2006 employment in auto manufacturing in Alabama more than tripled, and employment in parts manufacturing increased by more than a third.

But it isn't just cars. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, between 2001 and 2006 Alabama added 73,000 jobs, increasing payrolls by 3.9 percent, while Michigan lost 220,000 jobs,

a loss of 4.8 percent. Alabama's unemployment rate averaged 4.7 percent during that period, compared to 6.5 percent in Michigan. In 2001, per-capita disposable income was \$4,000 higher in Michigan than in Alabama, but by 2006, that advantage had shrunk to less than \$2,000.

We should be prepared to learn from and even emulate Alabama. That means freeing up our workforce with reforms like a right-to-work law. Repeal or reform of Michigan's strict prevailing wage law, which requires the payment of union wages on state-financed construction, would also be helpful. The prevailing wage adds 10 percent to the cost of construction, adding roughly \$250 million to the cost of government. Prevailing wage also costs jobs; Alabama, which does not have a restrictive prevailing wage law, added 5,000 construction jobs between 2001 and 2006, while Michigan lost 26,000.

Finally, we should look at our tax burden. According to the Tax Foundation, state and local governments in Michigan take 11.2 percent of personal income. Reducing the tax burden to Alabama's 8.8 percent could spur the creation of new businesses that create new jobs.

Above all else, if we are going to restore Michigan's economy, we will need to quit repeating our failures and start emulating successes. Michiganians might have been justified in looking down on Southern states once, but those days are over. When it comes to solving Michigan's current economic crisis, Sweet Home Alabama is a good place to look for answers. ■

Paul Kersey is director of labor policy with the Mackinac Center for Public Policy.

GOOD DEED*from Page One*

branches open in 2000, and the first wave of modernization in 2004 reduced this total to 153. Despite reduced resources, the secretary of state reports shorter wait times and expanded week-day and weekend service hours at the remaining facilities.

Fresh thinking and the implementation of new technologies made this productivity possible. Using the Internet and self-service stations moved visitors out of lines and on their way. One million annual trips to branch offices — in a state with 7.1 million drivers — were eliminated by creating a permanent license plate for trailers. Other annual trips have been wiped out entirely by encouraging the renewal of automotive plates through



Secretary of State Terry Lynn Land

the mail or via the Internet. The centerpiece has been consolidating branches into what are called “PLUS” offices and “Super!Centers,” which offer expanded hours and services closer to population centers. While modernization decreased total branch offices by 20, it expanded 23 of the remaining facilities into “PLUS” offices and five into “Super!Centers.”

State Rep. Andy Coulouris promised “pizza and sodas” if the protesters would repeat their tactics in Lansing. About 50 did exactly that.

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The secretary of state wanted to close nine more branches in 2007, while at the same time creating 10 more “PLUS” offices and one more “Super!Center” from those that remain. This would leave Michigan with 144 facilities where residents could register vehicles and renew licenses — roughly the same as in New York, a state with more than twice the number of drivers. California, with more than three times as many drivers as Michigan, has just 173 locations for registration renewals and 73 locations for license renewals.

There was substantial opposition. One lawmaker implied that it would disenfranchise “minority voters,” even though every Michigan voter can register

at their local township or city clerk’s office, and no one votes at a secretary of state office. Another said the state should discourage policies that lead to “urban sprawl;” an unlikely result with Michigan’s struggling real estate market. There was an allegation that removing the Milan branch would devastate the town, as if the purpose of these offices is to generate local commerce, rather than provide a cost-effective government service.

On Aug. 8, 2007, three Republican state representatives joined 53 Democrats in approving House Bill 4492, which would rewrite the funding formula for the branch offices so as to prohibit the closures. This followed a local rally against a proposed closing in

the Saginaw area that drew 200 protesters, including State Rep. Andy Coulouris, D-Saginaw, who promised “pizza and sodas” if the protesters would repeat their tactics in Lansing. About 50 did exactly that.

The final 2008 budget did not include this prohibition, but did include a provision demanding various reports and advanced notifications from the secretary of state before a branch office is closed or relocated. It is not clear whether this will impede the modernization plan or not.

The MichiganVotes.org tally for the prohibition on closing branch offices is provided below. ■

Check MichiganVotes.org

Legislators who voted TO PROHIBIT the secretary of state from closing branch offices:

2007 House roll call vote 292 on House Bill 4492

HOUSE REPUBLICANS (3)

Gaffney (R)

Horn (R)

Nofs (R)

HOUSE DEMOCRATS (53)

Accavitti (D)

Clack (D)

Espinoza (D)

Jackson (D)

McDowell (D)

Smith, Virgil (D)

Angerer (D)

Clemente (D)

Farrah (D)

Johnson (D)

Meisner (D)

Spade (D)

Bauer (D)

Condino (D)

Gillard (D)

Jones, Robert (D)

Melton (D)

Tobocman (D)

Bennett (D)

Constan (D)

Gonzales (D)

Lahti (D)

Miller (D)

Vagnozzi (D)

Bieda (D)

Corriveau (D)

Griffin (D)

LeBlanc (D)

Polidori (D)

Valentine (D)

Brown (D)

Coulouris (D)

Hammel (D)

Leland (D)

Sak (D)

Warren (D)

Byrnes (D)

Cushingberry (D)

Hammon (D)

Lemmons (D)

Sheltrown (D)

Wojno (D)

Byrum (D)

Dean (D)

Hood (D)

Lindberg (D)

Simpson (D)

Young (D)

Cheeks (D)

Ebli (D)

Hopgood (D)

Mayes (D)

Smith, Alma (D)

Legislators who voted TO ALLOW the secretary of state to close branch offices:

2007 House roll call vote 292 on House Bill 4492

HOUSE REPUBLICANS (47)

Acciavatti (R)

Caswell (R)

Hildenbrand (R)

Meltzer (R)

Pastor (R)

Sheen (R)

Agema (R)

Caul (R)

Hune (R)

Moolenaar (R)

Pavlov (R)

Stahl (R)

Amos (R)

DeRoche (R)

Jones, Rick (R)

Moore (R)

Pearce (R)

Stakoe (R)

Ball (R)

Elsenheimer (R)

Knollenberg (R)

Moss (R)

Proos (R)

Steil (R)

Booher (R)

Emmons (R)

LaJoy (R)

Nitz (R)

Robertson (R)

Walker (R)

Brandenburg (R)

Garfield (R)

Law, David (R)

Opsommer (R)

Rocca (R)

Ward (R)

Calley (R)

Green (R)

Marleau (R)

Palmer (R)

Schuitmaker (R)

Wenke (R)

Casperson (R)

Hansen (R)

Meekhof (R)

Palsrok (R)

Shaffer (R)

HOUSE DEMOCRATS (1)

Scott (D)

Legislators who DID NOT VOTE:

Dillon (D)

Hoogendyk (R)

Law, Kathleen (D)

Donigan (D)

Huizenga (R)

Meadows (D)

NEGOTIATING SAVINGS

Legislation would allow unions to negotiate privatization ban

Public school districts would be forced to allow school privatization to be an issue at the bargaining table under a bill approved by the Michigan House of Representatives. House Bill 4533 would repeal a 1994 law that has allowed Michigan public school boards the unilateral authority to decide when and why they need to seek private-sector contracts for noninstructional services, such as janitorial work, student meals and busing. House Bill 4533 would apply to instances when a union seeks a contract that would ban a district from competitively bidding out these services

to private-sector providers.

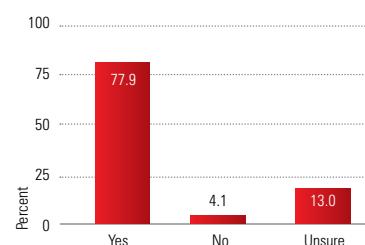
This vote marks the second time in 2007 that the Michigan House of Representatives went on record discouraging this sort of privatization. On May 22, 2007, an amendment to House Bill 4592 would have required districts to draft a competitive bidding plan for noninstructional services. The rejected amendment was the subject of a story in the September/October 2007 edition of Michigan Capitol Confidential: "Competitive Bidding Crashes in State House."

In its 2007 annual survey of outsourcing at public schools, the Mackinac Center reported that

222 of Michigan's 552 conventional public school districts, or 40.2 percent, were privatizing at least one noninstructional service during the 2006-2007 school year, and that 77.9 percent of them reported saving money over their previous "in house" means of providing the service.

Analyzing the privatizations that have already taken place, Dr. Ryan S. Olson, director of education policy for the Mackinac Center, estimates that Michigan's public school districts could save \$200 million more — and maybe as much as \$500 million more — if they all tried competitive

Savings From Outsourcing



contracting. While only 80 districts contract out for janitorial service, 85 percent report saving money, often more than \$100 per pupil. As an example, Coldwater Community Schools was a new convert to janitorial privatization in 2006 and estimated it will save a total of \$1.1 million over three years. Per pupil, this works out to \$104 annually, and the savings will be dedicated toward updating classroom technology.

Public school employee unions representing janitors, bus drivers and food service workers are often the biggest opponents of privatizing these services. Not coincidentally, House Bill 4533 is supported by the Michigan Education Association, the Service Employees International Union, the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, and various others. Additionally, the Michigan Department of Education and the Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Growth are also listed as supporting the legislation.

Opposition to the bill — and implicit support for keeping the 1994 law — includes a diverse coalition of private business groups and

public school districts: the Michigan Association of School Boards; the Michigan Chamber of Commerce; the National Federation of Independent Businesses; the Detroit Public Schools; the Michigan Association of School Administrators; intermediate school districts from the counties of Oakland, Macomb, Calhoun, Kalamazoo, Muskegon, Ottawa and Genesee; the Michigan Elementary and Middle School Principals Association; the Associated Builders and Contractors; and others.

House Bill 4533 was approved by the Michigan House of Representatives on July 25, 2007, when three Republicans joined 57 Democrats in support of the bill and 46 Republicans opposed it.

The MichiganVotes.org tally for the bill that would allow public school employee unions to bargain for a privatization ban is provided to the left. ■

FOR FURTHER READING: *The Mackinac Center's senior legal analyst, Patrick J. Wright, reviews the status of the 1994 law at www.mackinac.org/8763. Dr. Olson's savings estimate may be found at www.mackinac.org/9012. The 2007 survey of school district's competitive contracting is available at www.mackinac.org/8881. The September/October 2007 issue of Michigan Capitol Confidential is at www.mackinac.org/9023.*

Check MichiganVotes.org

Legislators who voted TO ALLOW PUBLIC SCHOOL EMPLOYEE UNIONS TO NEGOTIATE A BAN on privatization of noninstructional public school services:

2007 House roll call vote 268 on House Bill 4533

HOUSE REPUBLICANS (3)

Casperson (R) Gaffney (R) Rocca (R)

HOUSE DEMOCRATS (57)

Accavitti (D)	Clemente (D)	Espinoza (D)	Jones, Robert (D)	Meisner (D)	Spade (D)
Angerer (D)	Condino (D)	Farrar (D)	Lahti (D)	Melton (D)	Tobocman (D)
Bauer (D)	Constan (D)	Gillard (D)	Law, Kathleen (D)	Miller (D)	Vagnozzi (D)
Bennett (D)	Corriveau (D)	Gonzales (D)	LeBlanc (D)	Polidori (D)	Valentine (D)
Bieda (D)	Coulouris (D)	Griffin (D)	Leland (D)	Sak (D)	Warren (D)
Brown (D)	Cushingberry (D)	Hammel (D)	Lemmons (D)	Scott (D)	Wojno (D)
Byrnes (D)	Dean (D)	Hammon (D)	Lindberg (D)	Sheltrown (D)	Young (D)
Byrum (D)	Dillon (D)	Hood (D)	Mayes (D)	Simpson (D)	
Cheeks (D)	Donigan (D)	Jackson (D)	McDowell (D)	Smith, Alma (D)	
Clack (D)	Ebli (D)	Johnson (D)	Meadows (D)	Smith, Virgil (D)	

Legislators who voted AGAINST ALLOWING PUBLIC SCHOOL EMPLOYEE UNIONS TO NEGOTIATE A BAN on privatization of noninstructional public school services:

2007 House roll call vote 268 on House Bill 4533

HOUSE REPUBLICANS (46)

Acciavatti (R)	Caul (R)	Huizenga (R)	Meltzer (R)	Palsrok (R)	Stahl (R)
Agema (R)	Eisenheimer (R)	Hune (R)	Moolenaar (R)	Pastor (R)	Stakoe (R)
Amos (R)	Garfield (R)	Jones, Rick (R)	Moore (R)	Pavlov (R)	Steil (R)
Ball (R)	Green (R)	Knollenberg (R)	Moss (R)	Pearce (R)	Walker (R)
Booher (R)	Hansen (R)	LaJoy (R)	Nitz (R)	Proos (R)	Ward (R)
Brandenburg (R)	Hildenbrand (R)	Law, David (R)	Nofs (R)	Robertson (R)	Wenke (R)
Calley (R)	Hoogendyk (R)	Marleau (R)	Opsommer (R)	Schuitmaker (R)	
Caswell (R)	Horn (R)	Meekhof (R)	Palmer (R)	Shaffer (R)	

HOUSE DEMOCRATS (NONE)

Legislators who DID NOT VOTE:

DeRoche (R) Emmons (R) Hopgood (D) Sheen (R)

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Privatization

MICHIGAN SCHOOL PRIVATIZATION SURVEY 2007

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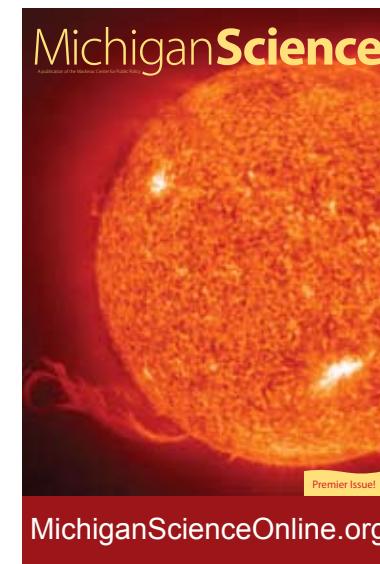
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Did you know?

Members of the Michigan House and Senate are the second highest-paid state legislators in the United States, behind only California.

Base member annual pay: \$79,650

Additional annual expense allowance: \$12,000

Supplements are paid to the following 12 legislative officers:

Speaker of the House: \$27,000

Majority leader in the Senate: \$26,000

Minority leaders in both House and Senate: \$22,000

Majority floor leaders in both House and Senate: \$12,000

Minority floor leaders in both House and Senate: \$10,000

Chair of Appropriations Committee in both House and Senate: \$7,000

House speaker pro tempore and Senate president pro tempore: \$5,513

In more than 30 states, the position of state legislator is a part-time job with a salary of \$30,000 or less. Texas — the second most populous state and second largest geographically — pays lawmakers \$7,200 per year.

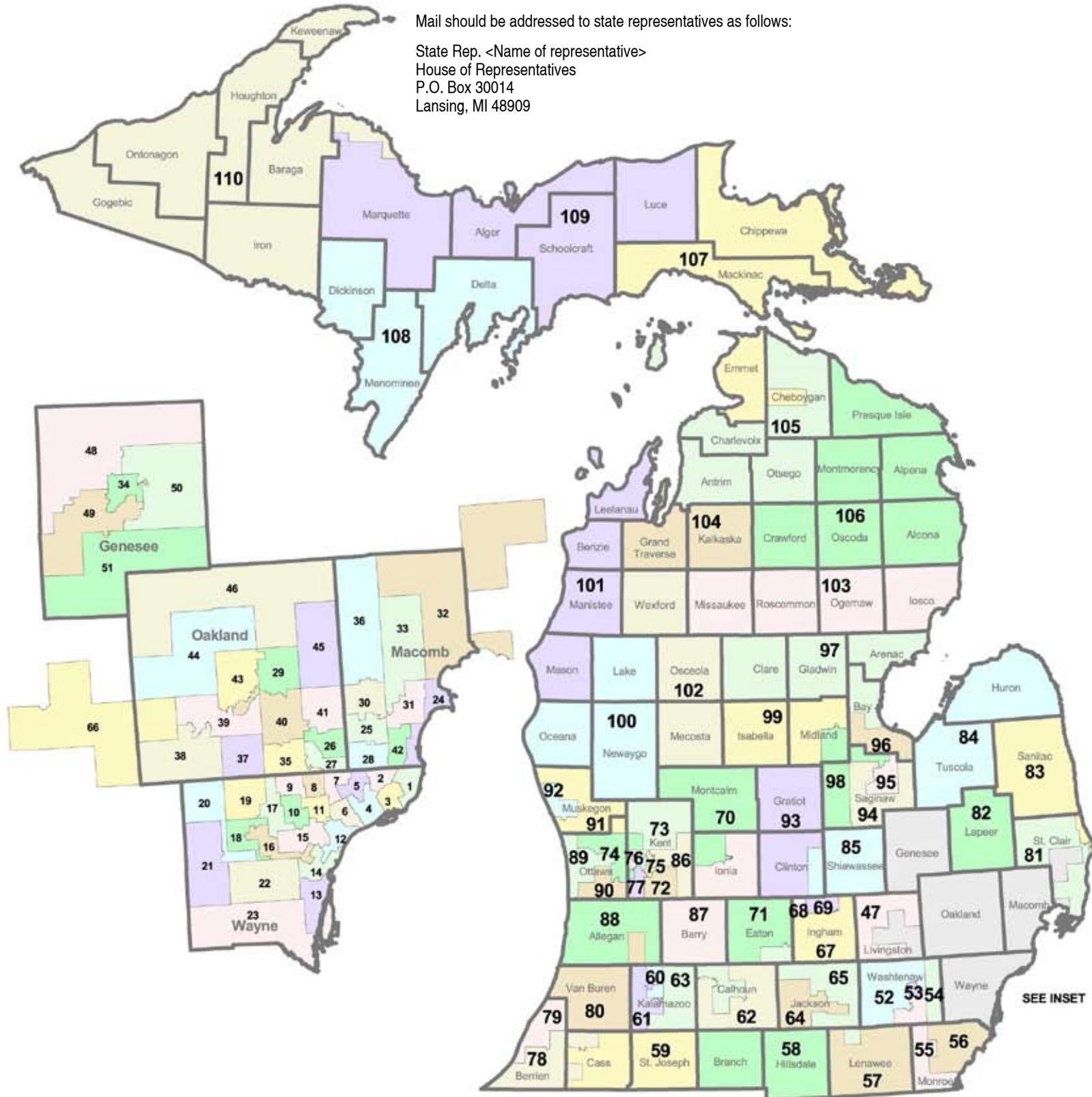
Some pay much less: New Hampshire legislators are paid a salary of \$200 for a two-year term of office, Alabama pays \$10 per day and New Mexico offers no salary at all — just expenses. ■

CAPITOL CONFIDENTIAL

Michigan's 110 House Districts *2001 Apportionment Plan*

Mail should be addressed to state representatives as follows:

State Rep. <Name of representative>
House of Representatives
P.O. Box 30014
Lansing, MI 48909



Information appears as follows:

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HOB = House Office Building
CB = Capitol Building

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HOUSE BILL 4890
(Authorize state poet laureate)

*Introduced by state Rep. Bruce Caswell,
R-Pittsford*

Authorize the appointment by the governor of a state poet laureate, who would serve at the pleasure of the governor (meaning the governor could withdraw the appointment at any time).

HOUSE BILL 4704
(Declare apple cider the official
state beverage)

*Introduced by state Rep. Pam Byrnes,
D-Lyndon Township*

Establish in law that henceforth apple cider shall be designated as the official State of Michigan beverage. Note: At present, Michigan does not have an official state beverage. Past bills have proposed designating milk as the official state beverage.

SENATE BILL 353
(Authorize state government international
trade agreement review entities)

*Introduced by state Sen. Ray Basham,
D-Taylor*

Create a state government “Office of Trade Enforcement,” a “Citizens Commission on Globalization,” and require the Legislature to appoint two state legislative “points of contact” to serve as liaisons with the federal government on trade-related matters. All these entities would be authorized to

undertake various lobbying and/or research activities related to U.S. trade policy. The bill would also establish conditions under which the state would “allow itself” to be bound by any international trade agreements entered into by the federal government, including an approval-by-the-Legislature provision. (Under the U.S. Constitution this provision would have no real effect, however, since Congress is granted exclusive authority to regulate commerce with foreign nations.) The bill contains a list of legislative “findings” that in general assert that recent international trade agreements have been harmful to the state.

HOUSE BILL 4902
(Mandate African history
course components)

*Introduced by state Rep. Mike Nofs,
R-Battle Creek*

Require that if a school district teaches African history in middle school or high school, the course content must be focused on one or more of the kingdoms of Ghana, Mali, Songhay, Benin, Bornu, Nubia, Axum, Meroe, Medieval Ethiopia, or the Swahili Coast.

SENATE BILL 136
(Mandate MDOT “hydrogen highway”
studies)

*Introduced by state Sen. Cameron Brown,
R-Fawn River Township*

Require the Department of Transportation to analyze the tasks that would be required to establish a “hydrogen highway” on which hydrogen fueling stations would be available every 20 miles. Among other things, the analysis would include reviewing and possibly recommending government subsidies for hydrogen fueling stations.

SENATE BILL 68
(Revise manicurist licensure law)

*Introduced by state Sen. Tupac Hunter,
D-Detroit*

Authorize manicurist training as a subfield of cosmetology schools. Under current law, licensure is required for schools that teach cosmetology and electrology, but there is no separate category for the teaching of fingernail clipping. Also under current law, licensure is required for those who clip fingernails for pay.