Discrepancies between what policymakers think they can spend and how much money is actually available have been a recurring pattern in Michigan government since fiscal year 2002. Michigan lawmakers were again confronted with this familiar story in May when the revenue estimating conference announced that the official Jan. 11 estimate of tax revenues for the upcoming fiscal year had been too optimistic. Forecasters said that there would be another gap between desired spending and projected income, also known as a “deficit.”

The projected shortfall for the fiscal year that begins on Oct. 1 is $393 million. Because the rosier January scenario had been the basis for pending budget bills, as well as for the governor’s 2009 Executive Budget Recommendation, the lower estimate will require a spending course correction.

State Sen. John Pappageorge, R-Troy, is a member of the Senate’s budget-writing Appropriations Committee and was arguably the lawmaker least in need of a course correction. When the initial, larger revenue projection was announced in January,
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Sincerely,

Kenneth M. Braun, Senior Managing Editor, Michigan Capitol Confidential

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People must demand honesty and integrity in their leaders

By Lawrence W. Reed

From time to time, Detroit Mayor Kwame Kilpatrick has shown good policy instincts. He has talked about reducing the city’s “bloated and wasteful budget” and has taken some steps to rein in the cost and expanse of local government.

How inadequate those brief moments become in light of the mayor’s lies under oath, secret deals, cover-ups and abuse of trust. These things are hardly leadership by example.

Leadership — and the personal character that produces it — counts. Its absence is costly. However, we must begin to take the current scandal in context. The current scandal has its roots in the personal and public weaknesses that made it possible.

Leadership is the art of including others, not of being alone. It requires thoughtfulness, hard work and a sense of sacrifice. It requires humility, courage and self-discipline. And it requires a sense of justice.

Yet character is ultimately more important than all the college degrees, public offices or even all the knowledge that one might accumulate in a lifetime. It’s the one thing over which every adult has total, personal control in virtually all circumstances. It puts a concrete floor under your future and an iron ceiling over it. It may be what others will remember about you more than anything else. Who would want to live in a world without it?

The evidence of a person’s character is the choices that person makes. You can’t choose your height, race or many other physical traits, but you can choose your character every time you decide what’s right or wrong and act accordingly.

Your character is further defined by how you interact with others and your standards of speech and conduct. Character is such an important ingredient in leadership that it is almost synonymous with it. If you’ve got character, others will look on you as a leader; flush it away and you’ll be seen for what you really are.

A deficit of character shows up every time somebody who knows the right thing to do neither does it nor defends it because doing so might be comforting or inconvenient. Moreover, when a person shirks his duty, succumbs to temptation, foists his problems and burdens on others, fails to exert self-discipline, or shamelessly flouts his breach of trust, he subtracts from his character. When he attempts to reform the world without reforming himself first, he subtracts from his character.

A free society flourishes when people seek to be models of honor, honesty and propriety at whatever the cost in material wealth, social status or popularity. It descends toward chaos when they abandon what’s right in favor of self-gratification at the expense of others; when lying, cheating or stealing are winked at instead of shunned.

Having character means that there are no matters too small to handle the right way.

At all levels of government and throughout society, we need more men and women who can’t be bought; who don’t mortgage integrity to pay for expediency; who have their priorities straight; whose word, oath, handshake and vows are ironclad; and who realize that the most impressionable among us—youths—are learning from the way we behave.

It will not suffice for any one bad figure to depart the scene if we don’t raise the standards of character we demand of all our leaders and those who aspire to lead. Character matters. It’s time we settle for nothing less.

Lawrence W. Reed is president of the Mackinac Center for Public Policy.
Rep. Marsha Cheeks, D-Detroit, portrayed the overspending as a matter of virtue and resolve. “This overage says to me that we have made the commitment to find the money to fund schools in our coffers throughout the year,” she said. Cheeks defined her fiscal priorities as the following: “I say fund education by any means necessary.”

The House version of the school aid budget was rejected by the Senate, forcing both chambers to meet in a conference committee and attempt to compromise on a budget that — presumably — will also conform to the balanced budget requirements of the state constitution.

The deadline is Oct. 1.

Had it been enacted, the House version of Senate Bill 1107 would have spent more than $13.4 billion, exceeding the highest previous school aid budget by half a billion dollars. The governor’s recommendation was $600 million above that benchmark, and the Senate proposed breaking the record by $400 million (but not overspending expected revenue).

According to official state estimates, the public school population will decline by 25,000 pupils between 2008 and 2009. The largest-ever state public school population was recorded in 2003; the estimate for 2009 is 86,000 fewer students than that peak. To put these declines in perspective, the combined student counts in the second-largest through fifth-largest Michigan school districts was 88,606. And only the second largest district — Utica Community Schools — had more than 25,000 pupils.

The MichiganVotes.org vote tally for the House version of Senate Bill 1107 is below. The contact information for members of the House of Representatives is on page 11. ■

For additional information and an opportunity to comment on this issue, please see www.mackinac.org/9615.

Check MichiganVotes.org

“Are We Nuts?”: Legislators who voted IN FAVOR of a K-12 budget that overspent estimated revenue by $32.2 million:

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Legislators who voted AGAINST the K-12 budget that overspent estimated revenue:

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Legislators who DID NOT VOTE:

LeBlanc (D)
OSCAR-WINNING TAXES

An estimated $600 million of the $1.4 billion tax increase imposed on Michigan last fall will come from a 22 percent surcharge lawmakers added to the Michigan Business Tax, the state’s primary income levy on companies doing business within the state. The end result, according to the Michigan Chamber of Commerce, has been to create a Michigan Business Tax that is much more complicated, costly and destructive to economic growth than even the notorious Single Business Tax that it replaced.

From a spring survey of nearly 10 percent of its more than 7,000 members, the Michigan Chamber announced that 77 percent reported a higher tax burden. One-third of those reporting hikes said the increase was in excess of 100 percent over the SBT; eleven percent reported a hike of more than 300 percent and one member reported a tax increase of 1,000 percent.

Forty-five percent of those reporting higher taxes said they would cope by laying-off employees or by delaying/cancelling planned salary increases; 15 percent stated they would cancel planned expansion within the state or leave the state entirely.

Senate Bill 1242 would offer a small amount of relief. The Gongwer News Service reports that its enactment would reduce the surcharge portion of the MBT by an estimated $130 million per year for three years. However, this provides only a partial remedy: It would still leave the entirety of the original MBT rate and most of the surcharge in place, meaning a net tax increase on Michigan businesses would remain.

Even this modest reform is unlikely: State government has already created new programs that spend the money being brought in by the tax hike. The Michigan Chamber has drawn particular attention to the package of subsidies for film producers that was requested by the governor and approved by lawmakers earlier this year. Carrying an estimated price tag of $118.2 million for just the first year, the moviemaker incentives are an example of state spending that makes even the meager tax cut in Senate Bill 1242 less likely.

“This administration thinks it’s OK to send refund checks to Hollywood producers who have no incentive to keep a presence here and not to hard-working job providers who are trying to improve this economy,” noted Tricia Kinley, the Michigan Chamber’s tax policy director.

Further driving home the point, the Chamber later produced a “movie” of its own: “How to Lower Your Michigan Business Tax Liability … and Win an Oscar While You’re At It.” It features State Rep. Chuck Moss, R-Birmingham, narrating a satirical lesson regarding how all Michigan job providers can pretend to be film producers, thereby tricking politicians into giving them tax rebates. When the “folks from Lansing” ask about the non-existent script, he warns, “just tell ‘em it’s in re-write.”

STUDENT HOUSING BUBBLE

Undergraduate students living in the University of Michigan’s West Quad dorms on the Ann Arbor campus paid $8,190 for a double room last school year, according to a May 19 article in the Michigan Daily, the campus student newspaper. This year, that price will jump $400 because of a 4.9 percent hike in residence hall room rates. The article states that on-campus housing at the university is more expensive than nine of the Big Ten institutions, with just Northwestern University – the conference’s only private school – charging more.

Meanwhile, the Ann Arbor Area Board of Realtors reported in April that the average home sale price in the region surrounding the campus was 6.58 percent lower during the 2008 January-April selling period than during the same months in 2007. This is consistent with a statewide 11.56 percent average sale price decline between the same selling periods, as measured by the Michigan Association of Realtors.

The campus housing director is quoted as defending the higher dorm costs by pointing to benefits that are not offered elsewhere:

“We’re the only housing in the nation that has our own security for housing,” she said. “Another thing is we have multicultural lounges — we have multicultural hall councils (and) peer advisors.”

The article quotes one student acknowledging the value that comes with higher relative housing costs. Another resident expressed skepticism that additional spending is needed for student activities, alleging that a recent surplus in one dorm budget went toward questionable ends:

“In Markley, we had money left over. We spent it on random stuff, hall t-shirts and a Harry Potter week. I didn’t think we needed as much money as we had left at the end.”

A CORRECTION

The May/June 2008 edition of “The Lowdown” reviewed a report from Taxpayers for Common Sense (www.taxpayer.net) that itemized the dollar amount of fiscal 2008 federal budget earmark requests that can be credited to each member of Congress. The findings for each member of the Michigan congressional delegation were listed at the end of this article, but Rep. Joe Knollenberg, R-Oakland County, was erroneously left off of the list.

According to the TCS report, Knollenberg was the sponsor of $33,317,990 worth of earmark requests in the fiscal 2008 federal budget.

Michigan Capitol Confidential apologizes for the oversight.
NEVER ENOUGH
from Page One

Budget. It is rising from $12 billion to nearly $12.5 billion, and yet, it is never enough.”

Sen. Nancy Cassis, R-Nov, asserted that those who voted for the amendments were endorsing a “spending spree” and asked whether they would “dare to increase taxes” again as a means of paying for their spending increases.

After the spending amendments failed, every Democratic senator but one voted against sending the Senate draft of the public health budget to the House of Representatives. Sen. Martha Scott, D-Detroit, explained that “there are some amendments that we did not pass today that I think are very, very important.”

“I would just point out that this budget shows an increase [of $434] million, almost a half-billion dollars over the current budget. It is rising from $12 billion to nearly $12.5 billion, and yet, it is never enough.”

— Sen. Tom George

She added that “until we get a real grasp on who it is we need to be taking care of, then I will continue to vote ‘no’ on these kinds of bills.”

On May 16, the official state tax revenue estimate for fiscal 2009 was downgraded, with the new analysis projecting $393 million less than had been anticipated in January 2008. Nonetheless on July 17, the Legislature and the governor agreed to a 2009 funding level of $12.5 billion for the Department of Community Health. This is $485 million above the amount appropriated for fiscal 2008 and the largest budget of its kind in state history.

The amount of additional public health spending that each state senator supported among the $90.5 million in budget amendments is displayed in the table below.

For additional information and an opportunity to comment on this issue, please see www.mackinac.org/9615.

FIND REAL NEWS THAT DOESN’T MAKE THE PAPERS!

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MichiganVotes.org

“Never Enough”: The amount of additional spending that each state senator supported from the $90.5 million in budget amendments to the Dept. of Community Health Budget:

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2008 Senate Roll Call 192-198 on SB 1094

Michigan Capitol Confidential J U L Y / A U G U S T 2 0 0 8  |  6
Here’s the Drill

Great Lakes directional drilling ban should be lifted

By Russ Harding

Editor’s note: A shorter version of this commentary appeared in the Lansing State Journal on June 29, 2008.

Perhaps it takes $4 a gallon gasoline to restore reason to U.S. energy policy. President Bush has called on Congress to lift the ban on off-shore drilling for oil and gas. Recent national polling indicates that consumers struggling with higher costs for food and energy have shifted their opinion — a majority now supports the development of offshore oil and natural gas reserves. This change in public opinion presents an opportunity to reconsider directional drilling for oil and natural gas underneath the Great Lakes, which was prohibited by state law in 2002 and by federal law in 2005.

Forbidding directional drilling was bad energy policy then and it’s bad energy policy now. Based on an analysis prepared by the Senate Fiscal Agency in 2002, continuing the practice would have resulted in an economic benefit to the state of approximately $1 billion. Adjusted for the price of oil today, the economic benefit of tapping Michigan’s Great Lakes reserves would be $3 billion to $4 billion.

State geologists estimate that approximately 30 wells could be directionally drilled under the Great Lakes. Directional drilling, also called slant drilling, is performed at an angle, allowing placement of the well head onshore rather than on a drilling platform in the lake. While director of the Department of Environmental Quality in 1996, I was approached by oil companies interested in exploring for oil and gas under the Great Lakes. After consulting with then-Gov. John Engler, I asked the Michigan Environmental Science Board (a group of scientists mostly from universities with environmental and natural resource expertise) to examine if directional drilling under the Great Lakes posed any threat to natural resources.

The Board concluded: “[T]here is little to no risk of contamination to the Great Lakes bottom or waters through releases directly above the bottom hole portion of directionally drilled wells.” The Board went on to say: “There is, however, a small risk of contamination at the well head.” The board made recommendations on steps that could be taken to mitigate any impact to the Great Lakes from the well head, including locating the wells at least 1,000 feet from the shoreline and implementing proper waste disposal measures. Before the ban, eight wells had been directionally drilled under the Great Lakes without environmental harm.

I received a call from a state senator who apologized in advance for voting for the ban. He acknowledged that directional drilling posed no real environmental threat, but told me that it was the right “political vote.”

Even though environmental safeguards recommended by the Michigan Environmental Science Board were put in place, the Michigan Legislature still voted to ban directional drilling under the Great Lakes. The day before the vote, I received a call from a state senator who apologized in advance for voting for the ban. He acknowledged that directional drilling posed no real environmental threat, but told me that it was the right “political vote.” Unfortunately, such actions are all too common among state and federal legislators who would rather reap the short-term perceived political benefit of appearing “green” without taking responsibility for the long-term damage done to energy supply and jobs.

No matter how bullish one might be about alternative energy, experts agree that we will be dependent on oil to meet our nation’s transportation and energy needs for many years to come. Our leaders in Washington and Lansing should encourage the responsible development of our abundant oil and natural gas reserves by eliminating arbitrary roadblocks such as the ban on directional drilling. By doing so, they would display a sincere attempt at meeting the nation’s energy needs while providing a much needed boost to the state’s lagging economy. Additionally, our state leaders should reject the worn-out argument that Michigan does not have enough untapped oil and gas to make a difference — a reasoning that if followed ensures a permanent energy stalemate.

Russ Harding is director of the Property Rights Network and senior environmental analyst at the Mackinac Center for Public Policy. For additional information and an opportunity to comment on this issue, please see www.mackinac.org/9615.
GREENHOUSE GAS
from Page 3

inventory, monitor and enforce carbon dioxide allotments from various energy users. An agency would then be assigned or created to ensure that no one cheats the system. The transaction costs to operate a regional CO2 cap-and-trade system are very likely to be high as there is a strong likelihood that some emitters will seek special treatment, exemptions or loopholes.

Gasoline prices would rise between $2.17 and $5.15 a gallon; residential electric costs would increase between 6.61 and 10.33 cents per kilowatt-hour and natural gas prices would rise by similar levels.

Additionally, you do not need to be an economist to recognize that when supply does not meet demand, prices will increase and create a greater risk of shortages. The U.S. Congress is considering legislation (the Lieberman-Warner Climate Security Act) that would establish a national cap-and-trade system for greenhouse gases similar to the approach stipulated in the Midwestern Greenhouse Gas Accord.

The American Council for Capital Formation and the National Association of Manufacturers recently completed a study that employs the National Energy Modeling System to estimate costs to the U.S. economy if the Lieberman-Warner bill is enacted. Breaking out costs by state, the study concludes that the low-cost projection assumes that 300 new nuclear power plants would be built in the United States by 2030 and the high-cost projection assumes 100 new nuclear power plants will be built — both optimistic assumptions. According to the study, Michigan can expect by 2030 to lose 91,000 jobs under the low-cost projection and 122,000 jobs under the high-cost projection. During the same time period, the average income of Michigan households would decrease $3,867 under the low-cost projection and $7,051 under the high-cost projection.

The study also says a greenhouse gas cap would greatly increase energy costs in Michigan: Gasoline prices would rise between $2.17 and $5.15 a gallon; residential electric costs would increase between 6.61 and 10.33 cents per kilowatt-hour and natural gas prices would rise by similar levels.

Michigan’s future energy policy is far too important to leave to the behind-closed-doors manipulation of government officials. A cap-and-trade system to reduce greenhouse gases could be devastating to Michigan’s economy and have no discernible impact on global climate change. The Michigan Legislature needs to intervene to ensure that transparency and the interests of Michigan residents are paramount in the further workings of the Midwestern Greenhouse Gas Accord states.

Russ Harding is director of the Property Rights Network for the Mackinac Center for Public Policy. A version of this commentary was originally published on June 9, 2008.

A cap-and-trade system to reduce greenhouse gases could be devastating to Michigan’s economy and have no discernible impact on global climate change.

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Michigan Capitol Confidential

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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 institute 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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Dear Michigan Capitol Confidential

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I must be a masochist to want to continue because every time I read the latest of Michigan Capitol Confidential, I go from blissful ignorance to informed anger!

WARREN, MI
We find it most interesting and informative. Have used the senators’ addresses that you’ve provided to let them know how I feel about certain bills that will be voted on. Thank you for that opportunity.

GRAND RAPIDS, MI
I was pleased to receive what appears to be your first publication. I found it very insightful, informative and a needed tool to help fight the battle against the fools that have turned our capitol into a laughing stock monkey-house. Please continue to deliver this newspaper to me regularly.

OSCODA, MI
I just finished reading the latest issue of Capitol Confidential and I have decided on the days I read the magazine I can do without my treadmill work out because you folks do a much better job of raising my heart rate. I cannot believe what “We the people” are letting our politicians get away with.

GRAND RAPIDS, MI
Thank you for sending the “Michigan Capitol Confidential” to my home. I found it to be refreshing and informative reading. Where have you been? I have been looking and praying for good, sound, and honest reporting for decades.

ROCHESTER HILLS, MI
Excellent Paper!
I first read “Spending Restraint Loses in Legislature” and read it to a friend out loud and it got us both upset. Then I read another article and then wondered how I got it. This is a paper I hope I always get!!!!!
I have always said we all need to know what was happening and get out and vote at the very least, but how can we if we are so engrossed in our everyday lives?
ETHANOL
from Page One

license plate for biofuels such as ethanol — drew just nine dissenting votes out of 38. These are among 32 ethanol-related bills pending before the Michigan Legislature. An earlier vote on one of these was the subject of a story in the January/February 2008 edition of Michigan Capitol Confidential: “Corny Energy Plans.”

In addition to state ethanol incentives, the federal government provides a 51 cent per gallon subsidy for domestically produced ethanol — primarily corn-based — and also a 54 cent per gallon tariff to deter the importation of foreign ethanol. Sugarcane is a comparatively rare crop in the continental United States, but is often the main ingredient of foreign ethanol. Tariffs to deter the importation of foreign ethanol and is considered a story in the January/February 2008 edition of Michigan Capitol Confidential: “Corny Energy Plans.”

Regardless, scientists, economists, energy experts and journalists representing nearly every point on the ideological spectrum have overwhelmingly come to appreciate that mixing food and fuel markets for political reasons has done American consumers no discernable good, while producing measurable harm. Noting that even a prominent left-wing economist had turned against ethanol, Mark J. Perry, professor of economics and finance at the University of Michigan-Flint, summed up a partial listing of skeptics:

“Anytime you have Paul Krugman agreeing on ethanol with such a diverse group as the [Wall Street Journal], Reason Magazine, the Cato Institute, Investor’s Business Daily, Rolling Stone Magazine, the Christian Science Monitor, The New York Times, John Stossel, The Ecological Society of America, the American Enterprise and Brookings Institutions, the Heritage Foundation, George Will and Time Magazine, you know that ethanol has to be one of the most misguided public policies in U.S. history.”

Eighty-five percent of American ethanol production requires corn and there are already five ethanol plants operating in Michigan with four more on the way.

Biofuel expert David Pimentel, a professor at Cornell University’s College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, asserts that ethanol diversions consumed 20 percent of American corn production in 2006, yet displaced just 1 percent of domestic oil production. The World Bank announced in April that world food prices had jumped 83 percent over the last three years. As much as one-third of this inflation can be blamed on ethanol production, according to Chris Peterson, professor of agribusiness at Michigan State University, testifying in May at a meeting of the Michigan Renewable Fuels Commission — an organization created by state lawmakers in 2006 to “encourage the production and use of biodiesel and ethanol products.”

While corn works well as energy for human bodies, it comes up short as a motor fuel. According to the U.S. Dept. of Energy, 1.33 gallons of E-85 (ethanol mixed with at least 15 percent gasoline) is needed to replace a single gallon of pure gasoline. Bloomberg News reports that the U.S. Postal Service proved this between 1999 and 2005, when 30,000 E-85 vehicles purchased for its fleet drove down mileage by 29 percent, causing the consumption of 1.5 million additional gallons. On the production end, professor Pimentel reports that “40 percent of the energy contained in one gallon of corn ethanol is expended to produce it.” Ironically, he added, most of that production energy is derived from “oil and natural gas” through the use of inputs required to grow and transport the corn.

A proposal to create a specialty license plate for biofuels such as ethanol drew just nine dissenting votes out of 38.

In other words, corn ethanol has a voracious appetite for the very fossil fuels that its supporters claim it should be replacing.

Despite all of this, Don Koivisto, director of the Michigan Department of Agriculture, declares corn ethanol to be a “quantum leap forward in the biofuels boom,” and he predicts that the conflict between food and fuel will be avoided by a changeover to cellulosic ethanol, which is derived from inedible agricultural products such as switchgrass.

But according to an otherwise optimistic article about cellulosic ethanol published on the Popular Mechanics Web site in January, this form of fuel is currently twice as expensive to produce as corn ethanol, not to mention regular gasoline. Similarly, Cornell’s Pimentel notes that cellulosic ethanol requires 70 percent more energy to produce than corn ethanol, again using mostly fossil fuels to get the job done. A Wall Street Journal editorial in May concluded: “…sometimes even massive government aid can’t turn science projects into products.”

According to the descriptions on the Mackinac Center’s MichiganVotes.org Web site, Senate Bill 1126 would require the state to market “renewable” fuel sites; Senate Bill 1128 would create an ethanol and alternative energy subsidy/regulation “how to” guide; and Senate Bill 1130 would establish new ethanol and alternative fuel subsidies.

Every single member of the Michigan Senate voted in favor of these bills on April 17. Their names and contact information are listed on page 10.

Senate Bill 1129 also passed as part of this package by a vote of 29-9. MichiganVotes states that this bill would “authorize a specialty license plate recognizing alternative fuels, and give the net revenue generated from sale of the plates to the subsidy and promotion program proposed by Senate Bill 1130.”

The nine senators who voted against creating a specialty license plate for biofuels were all Democrats. Their names are as follows:

Sen. Ray Basham, D-Taylor
Sen. Liz Brater, D-Ann Arbor
Sen. Irma Clark-Coleman, D-Detroit
Sen. Gilda Jacobs, D-Huntington Woods
Sen. Michael Prusi, D-Ishpeming
Sen. Mark Schauer, D-Battle Creek
Sen. Martha Scott, D-Detroit
Sen. Michael Switalski, D-Roseville
Sen. Gretchen Whitmer, D-East Lansing

For additional information and an opportunity to comment on this issue, please see www.mackinac.org/9615.
Did you know?

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

To find out which lawmakers represent you and to view interactive legislative district maps, please point your web browser to www.mackinac.org/9313.

If you do not have Internet access, then you may obtain copies of legislative district maps by calling 989-631-0900 or by sending a written request to us at: Mackinac Center for Public Policy, c/o MiCapCon District Maps 140 West Main Street, Midland, MI 48640

Capitol Confidential

Michigan Capitol Confidential | JULY / AUGUST 2008 | 10

Information appears as follows:

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Anderson, Glenn S.: D

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Pappageorge, John: R

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820 Farnum Building
Prusi, Michael: D

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310 Farnum Building
Stamas, Tony: 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.

WHO ARE YOUR LAWMAKERS?
<table>
<thead>
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Who is your lawmaker? [Link]
A sampling of proposed state laws, as described on MichiganVotes.org

**SENATE BILL 1208**  
(Establish official state “Scottish Tartan”)  
*Introduced by state Sen. Glenn Anderson, D – Westland*

Establishes that henceforth and forever more (or at least until a future legislature and governor see fit to declare otherwise), the official Scottish tartan of the great state of Michigan shall be the one described by the Scottish hand weavers and textile designers “thread count” denoted by the phrase “BG18* W2 BG8 W2 T8 DG2 T4 DG24 DR4 DG4*,” where the symbol “*” denotes 1/2 the total threads at the turning points. The bill is cosponsored by Senators John Gleason, Michael Prusi, Martha Scott, Deborah Cherry, Dennis Olshove, Michael Switalski, Raymond Basham, and Patricia Birkholz.

**SENATE BILL 1251**  
(Expand state government Commission on Spanish-Speaking Affairs duties)  
*Introduced by state Sen. Valde Garcia, R – Howell*

Revises the definition of “Spanish speaking” persons and populations in the law that created a state government Commission on Spanish-Speaking Affairs, and requires this commission to “coordinate a Hispanic Heritage Month celebration” in addition to its current duties. These include securing “appropriate recognition of Spanish-speaking accomplishments,” advising the governor and legislature on the “coordination of state programs serving Spanish-speaking people” and on “the nature, magnitude, and priorities of the problems of Spanish-speaking people,” etc.

**SENATE BILL 1348**  
(Authorize state Cobo Hall expansion subsidy)  
*Introduced by state Sen. Nancy Cassis, R – Novi*

Would use $50 million of the tobacco settlement money deposited in the “21st Century Jobs Fund” over the next years to subsidize an expansion of Cobo Hall in Detroit.

**HOUSE BILL 5598**  
(Establish rules for disposition of pets in divorce)  
*Introduced by state Rep. Michael Sak, D – Grand Rapids*

Authorizes a court in a divorce case to order either the placement of any pets with one or the other party, or that the pet be surrendered to the humane society. A court could not order “shared custody”; however the parties could agree to this if they choose. Any agreement about pets between the parties would be made enforceable under the bill.

**HOUSE BILL 6172**  
(Create state Asian Pacific American affairs commission)  
*Introduced by state Rep. Hoon-Yung Hopgood, D – Taylor*

Creates a government Asian Pacific American affairs commission, an office of Asian Pacific American affairs, and an interagency council on Asian Pacific American affairs. Among other things the commission would have the mission of advising the governor and legislature on the coordination and administration of state programs serving Asian Pacific Americans; make recommendations for changes in state programs, statutes, and policies; and advise on the nature, magnitude, and priorities of the problems of Asian Pacific Americans in this state.

**SENATE BILL 904**  
(Authorize new landfill materials bans)  
*Introduced by state Sen. Jud Gilbert, R – Algonac*

Would ban disposal of newspapers or newsprint in a landfill.

To comment on these bills, please see www.mackinac.org/9615.