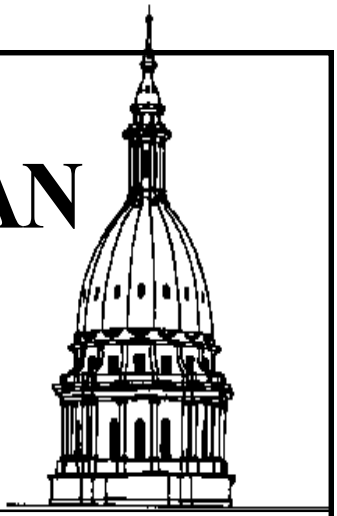
STATE OF MICHIGAN
Washington Report



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What's Happening in Washington?

Governor Writes Department of Energy

Governor Engler wrote U.S. Department of Energy Secretary Bill Richardson this month, urging continued support of the Low-Level Radioactive Waste Forum. The Forum is an association of state and interstate compacts dedicated to assisting states develop waste management and disposal strategies and has provided one of the key avenues for the cooperative effort between states and the Department of Energy to identify mutual challenges and solutions.

Engler stressed to Secretary Richardson that the continued cooperation between states and DOE is vital. Concern has mounted recently as the state of South Carolina takes steps that may result in more than half the states lacking access to a disposal facility that can accept the full range of low-level waste. Continued access to a disposal facility is essential for Michigan as one of the four nuclear power plants in the state is being decommissioned.

Governor Engler concluded his letter by reiterating his strong support of the Forum and his hope that the Forum could remain consistent with the level of services that states and governors have received in recent years.

Michigan National Cemetery on Track

In a continuing effort to secure a National Cemetery for veterans in southeastern Michigan, Governor Engler sent letters to members of the U.S. House and Senate Appropriations Subcommittees on VA, HUD and Independent Agencies.

Engler urged members of both subcommittees to appropriate $2.5 million for the Master Planning of new national cemeteries in the Construction, Major Projects account for the Department of Veterans Affairs in the VA, HUD and Independent Agencies Appropriations Bill for FY 2001. This amount was the level requested by the President in his FY 2001 budget proposal and reflects the amount necessary to commence Master Planning for at least four new national cemeteries, including a cemetery for the Detroit metropolitan area.

The Veterans Millennium Health Care Act (Public Law 106-117) directs the Department of Veterans Affairs to obligate advance planning funds and announce a schedule for establishing six additional national cemeteries. Previous studies conducted by the VA identify Detroit as one of ten most populated areas not served by a national cemetery.

What's Inside:

- **Michigan's Census 2000 Update.** Lt. Gov. reminds that **"an accurate count for Michigan means greater federal funding for our schools, our roads, and communities. We have to let America know what Michigan needs."**

Engler Supports "the Millenium Digital Commerce Act"

Governor Engler sent a letter to Senator Spencer Abraham in support of the Senate-passed version of S. 761, "the Millennium Digital Commerce Act" as conference committee deliberations began on the subject. The Senate passed bill would provide a technology neutral national baseline for the use and authentication of electronic signatures and transactions without unduly preempting state law and state efforts to update the legal framework governing electronic transactions.

Engler noted his concern for any federal initiative that would have the potential to preempt state authority, but admitted to a degree of usefulness in having interim national standards on the subject of internet transactions. Enactment of federal legislation would provide greater contract certainty for individuals engaging in electronic transactions immediately, while allowing Michigan and other states time to consider and adopt the Uniform Electronic Transactions Act (UETA).

Engler warned against a version of the same bill passed in the House of Representatives, H.R. 1714, which would render ineffective any state law that is inconsistent with its provisions, even in states that adopt the UETA. The House bill also does not adequately exclude state government transactions and would interfere with a variety of state laws governing consumer protection, oversight, regulatory and procurement functions.

In closing, the Governor reemphasized the importance in federal electronic signature legislation not preempting state law in states that adopt UETA in a uniform manner.

People in Washington

Michigan Supreme Court Chief Justice Betty Weaver was in Washington this week with Michigan Juvenile Justice Committee members. They met with eight members of the Michigan delegation to support the reauthorization of the juvenile justice bill.

Also in town was Betty Mercer of the Office of Highway Safety Planning for the Michigan State Police. Mercer briefed Michigan Delegation members on safety initiatives within the state including the new seat belt law that took effect on March 10th.

Governor Responds on CARA

John Engler recently responded to Congressman Dingell in a March 23rd letter regarding H.R. 701, the Conservation and Reinvestment Act (CARA). Engler noted that Michigan has traditionally held the unique status as guardian of the Great Lakes and therefore been among the leaders in conservation issues.

In the letter, Engler reaffirmed his support for congressional legislative efforts to share a meaningful portion of Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) mineral revenues with all states and territories. OCS revenues provided to the states and territories should allow for investments in state natural resource priorities, including coastal protection, restoration and impact assistance, park and recreation resources, and wildlife conservation and education.

The Governor concluded that his support for a legislative initiative providing natural resource and conservation investments of this nature would be dependant on identifying appropriate funding that would not impact other federally supported state programs. Under that assumption, Engler noted that Michigan should be afforded an equitable distribution of funds and maximum flexibility to target these resources toward our state's conservation priorities.

What's Happening in Michigan?

Tax Cuts Keep on Coming

On March 27th, Governor Engler signed five new tax cuts into law, raising the total number of tax cuts to 31 during his administration. The new cuts come just two months after his State of the State address announcing his further tax reduction goals and trim the income tax and boost the children's exemption for the income tax.

> "We are setting the pace for the rest of America...and don't plan to stop."
>
> -Gov. Engler

"The Michigan tax cut marathon continues," Engler said. "We are setting the pace for the rest of America in reducing the tax burden and don't plan to stop." Cuts are expected to save Michigan taxpayers $167.4 million in Fiscal Year 2000 and $94.9 million in FY 2001. The previous 26 tax cuts have saved taxpayers $15 billion. All bills were filed on the 27th with immediate effect.

Michigan Awarded for Adoption Increase

The Family Independence Agency was awarded more than $1 million in February from the federal Department of Health and Human Services for exceeding adoption goals in 1998. The money is a reward to states that work well to move children from foster care to adoption. Although thirty-five states received similar payments, only four were greater than Michigan's award.

The FIA earned the payment by increasing adoptions during fiscal year 1998. The baseline of 1,905, determined by averaging the number of adoptions finalized in the state for each year during the three previous fiscal years, was exceeded by more than 300 in fiscal 1998. Governor Engler noted the significance of this award, saying "This award demonstrates Michigan is a national leader in helping unites state wards with permanent, loving families." The award is based on adoptions of children who enter foster care for reasons such as abuse or neglect in their birth homes.

The federal government made the incentive payment program part of the national "Adoption 2002" initiative with a goal to double the number of adoptions nationwide between 1996 and 2002. Funding for the incentive program is an outgrowth of the 1997 federal Adoption and Safe Families Act.

Census 2000: Our Work Is Not Finished"

Figures released by Lieutenant Governor Dick Posthumus' office show that Michigan's mail-in response rate for the 2000 Census is at 52 percent. This places Michigan 5th nationally, behind only the 53 percent reported by Ohio, Iowa and Indiana, and the 55 percent posted by Nebraska. The national average is 46 percent.

Areas with especially strong responses include Bay, Midland and Macomb counties with 61 percent response rates. The deadline for returning the Census 2000 form is Saturday, April 1. After April 15th, Census 2000 workers will visit households that have not yet responded. **Communities with incomplete Census counts stand to lose millions of dolars in federal funds for needs like schools and education, roads, hospitals, emergency services and public safety.** The U.S. Census Bureau estimates that for each person who goes uncounted, their community will lost $5000 in federal funding.

In order to widely communicate the Census 2000 message, the Michigan Association of Broadcasters (MAB) and its members will promote the Census effort through announcements and promotional broadcasts. The MAB is a network of approximately 400 commercial radio and television stations and includes public radio, television and cable, making Michigan one of the top ten broadcast states.

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