1993 Legislative Activities

Crime

The Senate passed a major crime bill to add 100,000 police officers on the streets as well as money for more prisons and alternative forms of incarceration like boot camps. By increasing police visibility in communities, this bill does more than send the signal that we want to take our neighborhoods back. It will provide some tools to do just that.

Healthcare

For the first time, discussion of the problems and comprehensive solutions to health care in this nation have moved from the kitchen tables and emergency rooms to the Congress and the White House. President Clinton and Hillary Rodham Clinton deserve great credit for leading the way in the design of a health care reform package that will serve as a benchmark for the debate to follow. They have the whole country talking -- often arguing -- openly from one end to the other about an issue that was barely mentioned for more than a decade by occupants of the White House.

Job Training

The creation of a Center for Advanced Technologies, sponsored by Focus:Hope of Detroit is one of the most exciting projects underway in southeast Michigan -- no, make that the entire country. This year, I successfully worked to provide another $20 million of federal funding for this project so that it -- and its students -- can reach their full potential. The effort to establish an institution that can train individuals in the highest skills on the most technologically advanced equipment in a production setting is a success story that can be a model for the nation. As I toured the Center recently with Gen. Colin Powell, former chairman of the Joint chiefs of Staff, he was literally overwhelmed with the excitement and promise of this project. "We got a winner in this one," he said.

Armed Services

In the post-Cold War era, our military must continue to reduce its size and expense. Congress cut $13 billion from the amount provided for defense last year, which will force some Pentagon employees to seek new careers and some defense contractors to seek new products to build. We now face a new challenge -- helping former military facilities and weapons manufactures become productive assets for a peacetime economy. Our defense authorization bill this year included new requirements for federal agencies to assist in the revitalization of communities affected by base closures, and provided $624 million for projects that will assist defense dependent companies to develop technologies for the commercial market.

Bringing Technology Research to Michigan

I have been working hard to help convert military bases to useful sites for new commercial industries in Michigan, and to forge new partnerships between military research labs and Michigan's automotive industry.

We should be leading the effort to develop future American cars that can compete anywhere around the globe. Bringing high-tech research to Michigan -- for our automobile industry as well as other research and manufacturing sectors -- has been high on my agenda this year.

I was present at the White House for the launching of the "Clean Car" initiative -- a partnership of the "Big Three" and government to share research in new technologies and develop the car of the future. The Army's Tank Automotive Research, Development and Engineering Center (TARDEC) in Warren will be an important part of this effort. Using the expertise and the resources of TARDEC to help our auto companies has long been a priority of mine. I helped get some crucial funding for TARDEC and in November I hosted a ceremony where they signed the nation's first comprehensive Cooperative Research and Development Agreement which will encourage future federal-industry partnerships.

Michigan is leading the way with new alliances of industry, academia and state and federal government to create new technologies, processes and training methods to build a sound economic future for our state and our nation. In addition to the venture in Warren, groups in Ann Arbor, Detroit and East Lansing have distinguished themselves by being selected to participate in the federal Technology Reinvestment Project (TRP) to develop technology that serves both civilian and military purposes.

Government Ethics

The Senate has passed my bill to require full disclosure of paid lobbying efforts in Congress. Too many of the efforts of special interests to influence the decisions made in Washington are still hidden from public view. This bill will close loopholes lobbyists use to avoid reporting on their activities. We also won Senate approval of a bill to renew the law authorizing investigations of public officials by independent counsels. And, the Senate also passed my bill to ban the practice of giving "midnight bonuses" to political appointees in the final weeks of their government service. The House is expected to finish action on these initiatives next year.

Reinventing Government

In September, Vice President Gore presented his report entitled, "Creating A Government That Works Better and Costs Less." It was the product of nine months of work by the National Performance Review (NPR) and it took a top-to-bottom look at how the far flung federal government is and came out with specific recommendations for what is hoped-to-be radical reform. Congress also cut the cost of government

by ordering a four percent reduction in legislative staff, a fourteen percent cut in administrative expenses and a freeze in Senators' and staff salaries for next year.

I honestly believe we can make the federal government work better and cost less, and I will be exploring many of the suggested changes in my Oversight of Government Management Subcommittee. The American public greeted the NPR report favorably, and a majority of Members of Congress support the initiative. The real challenge comes in putting the report into action, and I expect the Congress and Administration will work hard to achieve significant changes.

Campaign Finance Reform

Both the Senate and the House have passed different bills to put a lid on skyrocketing campaign costs, and there are high hopes that work will be completed on a common bill next year. I helped shape the final compromise setting limits on spending in election campaigns that helped the bill win final passage. Spending in Michigan U.S. Senate races, for instance, would be cut by more than a third. The Senate bill would also restrict contributions by PACs and close loopholes in current laws that allow some funds to escape regulation. This much needed measure would help restore the public's confidence in congressional elections by leveling the playing field for all candidates and limiting the power of special interests in the electoral process.

Remembrance and Hope

This year we were witness to two public events which jolted our memories and aroused our deepest emotions. In April, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, situated on the Mall in Washington, D.C., was dedicated. President Clinton gave an eloquent speech. Speakers that day pleaded with the whole world not to allow repetition of such horrors. And yet, in spite of the fact that only half a century has passed since the Holocaust in Europe, "ethnic cleansing" is once again part of our everyday vocabulary. The warning about history not repeating itself has not been heeded in some places on the world map.

Later, in September, invited guests and a vast worldwide television audience watched in wonder as two old enemies, Prime Minister Rabin of Israel and Chairman Arafat of the PLO, shook hands and viewed the signing of a Declaration of Principles, step one in reconciling, in President Clinton's words, "the security of the Israeli people and the hopes of the Palestinian people." Setting up a self-governing authority in Jericho and the Gaza Strip would be the beginning in a peace process that will take time and patience. Large issues must be resolved, negotiations between the states in the region must move forward and normalization procedures must be advanced. Those who still choose to further their resistance in a violent manner must be convinced that the only hope for peace in the Mid-East is to allow all the different parties to meet, discuss and negotiate in an atmosphere of calmness and good faith.