1997 Legislative Activities

Keeping Our Economy Strong

Balanced Budget. Helped enact the Taxpayer Relief Act of 1997 which the President signed into law on August 7. The bill builds on the deficit reduction progress made in the 1993 deficit reduction bill. The deficit has been reduced from $290 billion in 1992 to $22 billion in 1997 and, with this legislation, the deficit will be reduced to zero by the year 2002, if not sooner.

$500 per Child Tax Credit. Worked to make the $500 tax credit partially refundable for many of those working families making under $30,000 per year. The per child tax credit, covering children 17 and under, is $400 in 1998 and $500 in 1999 and thereafter. A phase out begins at $110,000 for couples/ $75,000 for single parents.

Expanding Opportunities for Good Paying Jobs

Education Tax Cuts. Helped win enactment of tax cuts to make it possible for more Americans to pursue college education, including the **$1,500 HOPE Scholarship**, which provides a dollar for dollar tax credit for the first $1,000 of tuition and fees and a 50% credit for the second $1,000; the **Lifetime Learning Deduction**, a 20% credit which is applied to the first $5,000 of education expenses through 2002 and to the first $10,000 thereafter, which taxpayers can use for as many years as they are in school; and the **$2,500 per year student loan interest deduction,** which will be phased in through 2001 and is good for loans that are due and paid after December 31, 1997.

Employer-provided education assistance Helped win extension for three years of the tax exclusion for employer-provided education assistance for undergraduate students.

Making Michigan First in Educational Technology. Helped to ensure Michigan is prepared to fully benefit from the $2.25 billion in funding that will be available from the Universal Service Fund for schools and libraries as part of the Telecommunications Act of 1996. Traveled the state speaking about the need for Michigan's schools to update their technological resources. Michigan currently ranks among the bottom of the states in computer-to-student ratios and in training teachers to use technology in the classroom. Began meetings with government, education and business leaders in an effort to forge private-public partnerships to bring more technology to Michigan schools so our students are prepared for increasingly technical jobs in the 21st century.

Fighting for Fair Trade Practices. Successfully urged the President to name Korean auto trade practices as an unfair trade barrier to U.S. automotive exports under the "Super 301" provisions of U.S. trade law. Korea has one of the world's most protected automotive markets, yet it exports hundreds of thousands of cars to the U.S. each year. As co-chairman of the Senate Auto Parts Task Force, originated a bi-partisan group letter from Senators to President Clinton urging him to

name South Korea as a priority country under Super 301 and to actively seek further commitments from the Korean government to provide real market access for American made automobiles. On October 1, 1997 the Clinton Administration started the sanction clock ticking against Korea.

Corporate Average Fuel Economy (CAFE). Introduced legislation, along with Sen. Abraham (R-Mich.) to freeze Corporate Average Fuel Economy at existing levels until such time as Congress affirmatively acts to change them. Successfully worked to continue a moratorium on any CAFE increases in FY98 through appropriations.

Commercial Technology Initiatives. Helped ensure full funding for the National Automotive Center in Warren, Michigan, to work with the automotive industry to incorporate commercial technology into Army vehicles. Helped gain funding for an advanced technology project called Seamless High Off-Chip Connectivity that could increase the performance and reduce the price of military computing.

Fighting for Michigan's Transportation Systems

Highway Funding. Authored an amendment to provide for a short-term extension of highway funding that would have provided more money for Michigan than the Senate-passed or House-passed extension bills.

Public Transportation. Together with Sen. Abraham, successfully secured $7.5 million in the transportation appropriations bill to provide for Michigan transit/bus needs.

Gas Tax Repeal. Cosponsored Sen. Mack's "turnback" proposal to repeal most of the federal gas tax and transfer most transportation programs back to the states, except for research, interstate maintenance and a few others.

Providing for Health Care Security

Children's Health. Helped lead Congressional efforts to pass a child health initiative as a part of the budget reconciliation bill. The bill included $24 billion to provide health insurance for uninsured children. Michigan will receive $91.6 million in federal matching dollars in fiscal year 1998 which will go to fund Michigan's new children's health plan, MICHILD. These funds will help insure children of working low or moderate-income families who do not already qualify for Medicaid.

Retirement security. Helped win enactment of provisions to expand access to individual retirement accounts and which will make important investment tools more flexible. The bill provides for expanded IRA eligibility by doubling the current income limits for tax-deductible IRAs. The bill also protects 401(k) savings by ending the practice which required that an employee's savings in a 401(k) plan be invested only in the company's own stock, which caused some taxpayers to lose much of their retirement savings when their employer's stock lost value. The new provision allows employees to diversify their savings if they wish.

Registry for adopted adults. Won Senate passage of legislation

creating the National voluntary reunion registry which permits the HHS Secretary, at no net expense to the federal government, to facilitate the voluntary, mutually requested reunion of birth parents, adult adoptees and separated siblings over the age of 21, who are looking for one another.

Improving Organ Donation systems. Won Senate adoption of legislation which encourages hospitals to implement new procedures to fulfill their legal responsibility to inform surviving family members of organ donation options. Also won passage of legislation directing the HHS Secretary and the GAO to conduct a comprehensive study of efforts underway at hospitals to improve organ and tissue procurement.

Studying anti-addiction medication. Hosted a forum on the progress of government sponsored and pharmaceutical company research, on anti-addiction medications to counteract the craving for illicit addictive substances. Forum participants included NIH officials, researchers from academic institutions and leaders in the pharmaceutical industry, who showed that a number of disincentives were preventing the pharmaceutical industry from becoming more involved in anti-addiction research.

Making Government Work Better

Campaign Finance Reform. As a principal co-sponsor of McCain-Feingold campaign finance reform legislation, helped obtain commitment from Majority Leader Trent Lott for a vote on the bill in early March, 1998.

Regulatory Reform. Introduced a bipartisan regulatory reform bill, S.981, with Sen. Thompson (R-Tenn.). The bill would require cost-benefit analyses and risk assessment for major rules and consideration of common sense alternatives. In September, 1997, the Governmental Affairs Committee held a hearing on the bill, and committee mark-up and full Senate consideration are anticipated in 1998.

Eliminating Government Waste. Sponsored legislation with Sen. John McCain (R- Ariz.) to eliminate unnecessary Congressionally-mandated reports from federal agencies.

Campaign Finance Hearings. Served as one of the senior members on the Committee investigating fundraising abuses in the 1996 federal election campaign.

Immigration Initiatives

Easing restrictions at Canadian border. Cosponsored legislation to amend a provision in the 1996 immigration bill that will cause extreme traffic congestion at the U.S. Canadian border.

Obtaining Green Cards. Supported a permanent extension of section 245(i) of the Immigration and Nationality Act, which is scheduled to terminate on Friday, Nov. 14, 1997. Section 245(i) allows eligible aliens

-- those who have a current immigrant visa number available but who are unlawfully in the United States -- to remain and adjust their status on payment of a $1,000 penalty. If Congress doesn't continue the program in some form, illegal immigrants would have to travel to U.S. consulates overseas to file for legal permanent residence. By exiting the United States to get their green cards, they could find themselves barred from returning for up to 10 years under sanctions included in last year's immigration law.

Judicial Appointments

New Judges. Recommended three Federal District judges. President Clinton nominated all three candidates. One 6th Circuit Court of Appeals nominee from Michigan, Eric Clay, was confirmed by the Senate and has been sworn in.

Putting the Federal Government to Work for Michigan

Traverse City Airport. Succeeded in obtaining the TARDIS radar system from the FAA for Traverse City Cherry Capital Airport (TVC) to improve airport safety. This computer- based radar interpreter provides a direct data feed to Traverse City Tower from a central radar station in Empire, Michigan. System enables air traffic controllers to see inbound air traffic in time to provide a safe landing area in the event of communications/systems failure.

Manistee Blacker Airport. Won inclusion of a provision in Transportation Appropriations Act directing the FAA to give Manistee Blacker Airport "priority consideration" for an Instrument Landing System (ILS) to improve safety at the airport.

Military Airport Program. Won passage of a provision to make the former K.I. Sawyer Air Force Base eligible for Military Airport Program (MAP) funds available through the FAA. (K.I. Sawyer was previously ineligible for the grant because the funds were limited to airports that would alleviate congestion in metropolitan areas.) Assisted in securing $763,000 MAP grant to Marquette County to assist in the costs of relocating Marquette County Airport to Sawyer Airport.

Protecting the Great Lakes and Michigan's Environment

Great Lakes. Helped maintain funding for a variety of important Great Lakes programs, such as lamprey control efforts ($8.353 million), non-indigenous control and research programs (over $30 million-all agencies), National Sea Grant, Coastal Zone Management grants to states, and contaminated sediment research and cleanup technology development ($4 million, an increase of $2 million over last year's funding).

Removing Contaminated Sediments. Introduced legislation proposing to use up to $300 million of Superfund money to clean up contaminated

sediments at Areas of Concern (AOCs) in the Great Lakes and from waterways around the country. This will potentially help implement Remedial Action Plans at 13 AOCs in Michigan.

Protecting agriculture. Led successful effort in the Senate to get an increase of $1 million for wheat scab research, which has severely hurt Michigan wheat crops. In addition, successfully supported funding for a variety of important agriculture research projects in Michigan, including apple fireblight, the Michigan Biotechnology Institute and fruit crop management.

North Country Trail. Successfully added $50,000 to the base operations for the North Country Trail, which will be used in FY98 for a Geographic Information System to map the Trail and train volunteers.

Preserving Great Lakes Water. Fought to prevent Army Corps of Engineers approval of permits that would divert ground water out of the Great Lakes Basin.

America Recycles Day. Introduced a resolution commemorating "America Recycles Day" and cosponsored the national bottle deposit bill.

Working to Ensure Our National Security

Arms Control. Helped gain Senate ratification of the Chemical Weapons Convention, which prohibits the production and use of chemical weapons around the world. Led successful effort to fully fund the Cooperative Threat Reduction Program to continue efforts to combat the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

Bosnia. Authored provision establishing congressional position that U.S. ground combat forces should not participate in Bosnia after June 1998, and that any necessary follow-on force should be led by Western European countries. Successfully promoted the deployment of "Commando Solo" aircraft which broadcast radio and television programs in Bosnia to counter distorted Bosnian Serb broadcasts.

Cost Containment. Successfully fought efforts to require the taxpayers to purchase more B-2 bombers that the Pentagon says it doesn't need. Authored provision establishing a cost cap for the purchase of the Navy's next aircraft carrier.

Defense Management Reform. Authored provisions requiring reform of DOD's financial management systems and the use of more efficient commercial practices to eliminate unneeded inventory. Supported effort to begin implementation of DOD's Quadrennial Defense Review by beginning required reductions in headquarters staffing and active and reserve force levels.

Important Michigan Defense Projects. Helped ensure funding for the Crusader Advanced Field Artillery System; the Family of Heavy Tactical Vehicles; the Heavy Assault Bridge; M1 Tank Upgrades; the National Automotive Center in Warren, MI, including continued research into aluminum metal matrix composites to strengthen armored vehicle track

shoes and engine components at significantly reduced weight; and continued development of the Advanced Amphibious Assault Vehicle. Helped ensure legislative authorization for the construction of an Air Combat Training System and Radar Approach Control complex at the Alpena Air National Guard Base; a vehicle maintenance and communications complex at Selfridge Air National Guard Base, and an Armory for the Army National Guard in Augusta. Helped accomplish the transfer of the Warren Tank Plant to the City of Warren.