STATE OF MICHIGAN
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What's Happening in Washington?

Governors Appeal to FCC for Protection of Public Safety Systems

Governor Engler joined three other governors in a letter to Federal Communications Commission Chairman William Kennard, expressing concern for the FCC's planned "Letter of Understanding" with its counterpart in Canada. The agreement would prevent the states of Michigan, New York, Vermont and Maine from building and operating statewide public safety radio systems in the 700 MHz band.

The governors pointed out that certain states have worked diligently to identify potential radio spectrum for public safety systems. This includes the frequencies in the 700 MHz band that the FCC has allocated exclusively for public safety pursuant to a congressional mandate. The Canadian government has developed a digital television (DVT) channel plan that would place new television stations on channels 60-69, occupying the 746-806 MHz band, along its border with the United States. A situational analysis indicates that the proposed Canadian DTV stations would create interference to public safety radio operations in substantial portions of border states, preventing the use of any of the band for statewide operations. Commercial use of the 700 MHz band would also be impacted along the Canadian border.

The letter acknowledged that it was currently necessary to accommodate certain analog U.S. television stations on channels 60-69, but this is a temporary situation which will be eliminated at the end of the DTV transition in the U.S. The Canadian DTV plan does not contemplate a similar clearing of channels 60-69, and new Canadian DTV stations in that band will remain indefinitely. Consequently, many U.S. border states will never be able to utilize the 700 MHz public safety band.

The Letter of Understanding currently includes a provision that essentially forbids U.S. public safety agencies from operating near the Canadian border, as they would receive harmful interference from Canadian DTV channels. The governors believe that the proposed agreement must be modified to give interference protection to public safety users. While this would require Canada to modify its DTV channel plan to avoid use of channels 60-69 along its border, it is consistent with the Congressional mandate for public safety radio services. The governors concluded by asking the Commission to examine the issue carefully to avoid decisions that could have a lasting negative impact on the life, health and safety of U.S. citizens.

What's Inside

- **State Welfare Caseload Reaches 30 Year Low**
- **Former Lt. Gov. Receives Honorary Law Degree**

Engler Writes Congress for Fishery Funding

Governor Engler wrote the U.S. House Appropriations Subcommittee requesting support for total funding of $12 million for the Great Lakes Fishery Commission in Fiscal Year 2001. This bi-national institution has the responsibility to carry out sea lamprey control and to coordinate fisheries research across the Great Lakes ecosystem. This request is consistent with the President's budget recommendation this year, represents a $2.6 million increase over last year's funding level, and is crucial to the long-term health and prosperity of Michigan's valuable fishery.

Sea lampreys originally entered the Great Lakes through shipping canals and have devastated the fishery. Sea lampreys have caused fish harvest to fall from about 17 million pounds annually to only a few hundred thousand pounds. Fortunately, it is possible to keep sea lamprey population under control with the use of effective lampricides and alternative control techniques such as barriers, traps and the sterile-male-release-technique. Through the Great Lakes Fishery commission, sea lamprey populations have been cut by a remarkable ninety percent.

Two years ago, Michigan provided $3 million for this federal responsibility so that the Great Lakes Fishery Commission could begin sea lamprey control on the St. Mary's River, the last major sea lamprey "hot zone" on the Great Lakes. The proposed increase in federal funding for FY 2001 would bring the commission closer to its full program requirements and would be used to increase the implementation and further development of alternative sea lamprey control techniques. Refinements in the treatment program and the use of alternative controls have produced the same level of sea lamprey control as in previous years with savings of $1.2 million per year. Thus, investments in alternative control techniques make economic sense and allow the commission to deliver a more integrated and effective program.

Engler concluded by emphasizing the importance of the long-term sustainability of Michigan's fishery resource and that the control of the sea lamprey population is essential to the strength and future of the state's $4 billion Great Lakes fishery.



What's Happening in Michigan?

Michigan Jobs Increase, Unemployment Remains Low

April saw the creation of 12,000 new jobs in Michigan, which marks the second largest monthly increase since March of 1999. The Michigan Department of Career Devlopment (MDCD) reports that the significant growth in state employment coupled with a continued low rate of unemployment signifies that Michigan's economic engine continues to hum along nicely.

The unemployment rate inched up to 3.0 percent from March's rate of 2.9 percent, but the rate was eight-tenths of a percentage point lower than it was in April of 1999. Since April of last year, unemployment in Michigan has decreased by 46,000 jobs, or 23.2 percent. This April also marked the 61st consecutive month that Michigan's jobless rate has remained below the national rate, currently 3.9 percent.

Class of 2000 First to Receive Michigan Merit Awards

Nearly 37,000 Michigan high school seniors will be among the first of two groups from the graduating class of 2000 who qualify for $2,500 under the Michigan Merit Award program. Notification letters will start arriving in students' homes this week.

Awards are based on performance on the Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) test, administered each year to high school juniors and seniors at public and nonpublic schools throughout the state. Students may also qualify by performing well on supplemental national tests such as the ACT, SAT or Work Keys skills test, in addition to qualifying scores on the MEAP. The first group of students to receive the award consists of more than 36,000 kids who tested prior to March 2000; the second group is made up

of students who tested in April-May of 2000 and will be notified later this fall.

Legislation passed last year created the Michigan Merit Award program with funding provided by a portion of the state's 1998 multi-state settlement with tobacco manufacturers. Awards may be used at any time within seven years of graduation, and may be applied to a variety of education-related expenses including computers and day care for dependents.

To find out more information about the Michigan Merit Award program, visit the web site at www.MeritAward.state.mi.us

Welfare Caseload Achieves 30 Year Low

Governor Engler announced that the Family Independence Program (FIP) average caseload for the month of April was lower than anytime in the last 30 years. The average daily caseload for the month was 72,430, the lowest it has been since April 1970 when the caseload was 71,758. About 38,000 of the April cases were child only or deferred cases, which means that only approximately 34,000 cases represented work ready adults.

Engler noted the achievement, declaring "Record numbers of people have traded a welfare check for paycheck. Few believed the cash assistance caseload would decline this much when we began our welfare reform program in 1992. We expect to see continued reductions as the FIA starts the Family Independence Summer project next month."

The summer project will run from June through August and will focus on families who have been unable to find a steady job. Adults required to participate in the project may be involved in literacy, life skills, home management or other training to help them overcome barriers to employment. Their children will be offered opportunities to participate in tutoring and day camp activities. Older children will be connected with Summer Youth Employment.

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-Gov. Engler

The FIP caseload has declined by 68.1 percent since March 1994. Current and former FIP recipients continue to receive supportive services that enable them to become self-sufficient. Supports provided by the FIA include childcare, food stamps and medical assistance.

Former Lt. Gov. Binsfeld to Receive Honorary Law Degree from Notre Dame

Governor John Engler congratulated former Lt. Governor Connie Binsfeld who will receive an honorary doctor of law degree from the University of Notre Dame on Sunday, May 21.

"Connie Binsfeld distinguished herself in Michigan by being the only woman who has held leadership positions in the Michigan House, Senate and executive offices," said Governor Engler. "She is best known for being a tireless advocate for children. From reforming Michigan's adoption laws to directing the Children's Commission and founding the Chance at Childhood Foundation, Connie Binsfeld has been a champion for children. I heartily congratulate her on being honored by Notre Dame University with an honorary law degree."

MDOT Releases Get Around Guides

The Michigan Department of Transportation has released the summer Get-around Guide in order to help Michigan motorists avoid major construction as much as possible.

In addition, MDOT is working to reduce travel frustrations by scheduling work for nights and during off-peak travel times. Construction crews also will stop work on routes that will delay weekend travel.

For information on construction in Michigan, visit the MDOT website at www.mdot.state.mi.us

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