

THE JACOBS CAPITOL REPORT

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BUDGET HOLE SWALLOWS STATE VEHICLES DMB Puts Brakes on Cars, Mileage Reimbursements

Governor Jennifer Granholm has eliminated 2,543 government-owned vehicles from the state fleet since she took office in 2003. That was before this week, when the Department of Management and Budget (DMB) released a report showing how the state could save an additional \$6.5 million a year by grounding another 109 state-owned cars—including those issued to department heads, justices, and appellate judges.

In response to the report, Chief Justice Clifford Taylor called on his judicial colleagues to voluntarily turn in their state cars as part of an effort to save \$2.94 million in Fiscal Year (FY) 2008. The Court of Appeals is expected to follow suit.

Although the justices and judicial staff are under no obligation to do so, any refusal to return their state cars may only delay the inevitable. Representative Marc Corriveau (D-Northville) has called for legislation to permanently remove state vehicles from judicial and directorial compensation plans.

Confronting judicial travel expenditures is one of many recent efforts to reduce the budget deficit without raising taxes. This week, the Senate sent the governor legislation allowing shifts and accounting changes in the School Aid Fund (SAF) that will effectively trim the hole in this year's state budget to about \$399 million (half of what it was a month ago).

DMB also plans to decrease mileage reimbursement levels to 32.8 cents-per-mile from the current 48.5 cents-per-mile. The report also recommends reducing the amount of money spent on car washes and eliminating taxable meals from reimbursement eligibility, in addition to other money-saving changes.

Justice Taylor went one step further than the report, recommending that certain judgeships be eliminated by attrition. "We may have reached a point where our state may, to put it bluntly, have more judges than it truly needs," he said. "We should not have more judges than we need, and that is even truer now."

In response to Justice Taylor's announcement and the DMB report, Chief Judge for the Court of Appeals William Whitbeck declared that the decision to turn in state cars is a political reality. "It's more than a suggestion," he said. "It's a fait accompli. The debate is over."

Court of Appeal judges make \$152,000 a year.

STATE EMPLOYEES TO FEEL BUDGET CRUNCH

20-Day Temporary Layoff for Non-Union Workers

Governor Granholm has asked the Civil Service Commission to amend its rules in order to accommodate her measure to temporarily layoff non-union state workers.

The Civil Service Commission (CSC) is a bipartisan commission consisting of four non-salaried persons appointed by the governor to serve eight-year, staggered terms.

The CSC is empowered by the Constitution of the State of Michigan (Article 11, Section 5), to:

- classify all positions in the classified service according to their respective duties and responsibilities
- fix rates of compensation for all classes of positions
- approve or disapprove disbursements for all personal services, determine by competitive examination and performance exclusively on the basis of merit, efficiency and fitness the qualifications of all candidates for positions in the classified service
- make rules and regulations covering all personnel transactions; and
- regulate all conditions of employment in the classified service

Under the governor's budget-balancing plan, more than 15,300 "Nonexclusively Represented Employees" (NEREs) will be forced to take an unpaid 20-day vacation. The affected workers will continue to receive insurance coverage and accrue leave time, but cannot substitute annual leave, sick time, or deferred hours to meet the "layoff" requirement.

The rule change is part of a contingency plan for departments in case the state can no longer pay its bills and must be forced to shut down. The temporary layoffs may also be explored as means to shave more money from

the budget deficit.

Union members who work for the state will not be affected. In order for that to happen, current contracts would have to be reworked at the bargaining table.

SPRING WEATHER BRINGS OUT BIKES MDOT Reminds Motorists to be Aware of Bicyclists

It's that time of year again when bicycles come out of storage and riders venture out on the open road. The Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) cautions motorists throughout the state to be on the lookout for individual bicyclists and bicycle tour groups.

Bicycles have the same rights as motor vehicles on both state highways and local streets. While most bicyclists travel on the paved shoulders of state highways, or on designated bike lanes in select areas, some roads have only partially paved shoulders. Urban areas with curbs generally have no separate area for bikes. As a result, many bicyclists either ride very close to travel lanes or in the lanes themselves—along with motor vehicles.

"It is very important that motorists be courteous and properly accommodate bicyclists and bike tour groups," said MDOT Director Kirk T. Steudle. "Please slow down and be ready for unexpected movements when approaching bicycles on the road."

Additionally, bicyclists must remember to be very cautious in their travels on the roadways. Where feasible, it's best for them to maintain the greatest distance possible from the road's travel lane. Traveling in single file and maintaining uniform spacing are also very important to promote safety for bicyclists.

For more information on Oakland County paths and bike trails (including maps), please visit:
http://www.oakgov.com/parksrec/program_service/trails_intro.html.

WIT, WISDOM, ETC . . . Quotables

"Courage is resistance to fear, mastery of fear, not absence of fear."
-Mark Twain

“It is not the years in your life but the life in your years that counts.”
-Adlai E. Stevenson

Quote of the Week: Mark Steyn

“It’s deeply damaging to portray fit fully formed adults as children who need to be protected. We should be raising them to understand that there will be moments in life when you need to protect yourself — and, in a ‘horrible’ world, there may come moments when you have to choose between protecting yourself or others.”

All Michigan legislation can be tracked at
<http://www.legislature.michigan.gov/> .

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State Senator Gilda Jacobs represents the 14th Senate District, which includes Beverly Hills, Bingham Farms, Farmington, Farmington Hills, Ferndale, Franklin, Hazel Park, Huntington Woods, Lathrup Village, Oak Park, Pleasant Ridge, Royal Oak Township, Southfield, and Southfield Township. She is the Minority Vice Chair of the Families & Human Services Committee and the Campaign & Election Oversight Committee. She also serves on the Finance, Economic Development & Regulatory Reform, and Health Policy Committees.

Constituents of the 14th District may contact Senator Jacobs at
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or toll-free at 1-888-937-4453.

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