

## IN BRIEF

## House OKs measure to let more defer taxes

The state House on Wednesday approved a bill that would allow more people to put off paying their summer property taxes by raising the eligible income level.

The House voted 109-0 to send the bill to the Senate. Rep. Lorence Wenke, R-Richland, did not vote.

The legislation would allow more people to defer the taxes by raising the eligible household income from \$25,000 to \$35,000. If a deferment is requested, an eligible homeowner's summer property tax would not be collected until Feb. 15 of the following year.

Rep. Tory Rocca, R-Sterling Heights, introduced the bill to help property owners deal with an upcoming shift in the due date for county property taxes. One-third of county property taxes must be paid this summer with the rest due this winter. Homeowners will have to pay two-thirds of their county property tax bill next summer and the remaining one-third in the winter.

Beginning in 2007, the entire amount will be collected as summer taxes to fill in for lost state revenue sharing dollars.

## Woman may have sold baby to Mich. couple

WILLIAMSBURG, Ky. — Police in Kentucky and Michigan are investigating allegations that a Whitley County woman sold her 10-month-old daughter.

The 18-year-old Williamsburg woman hasn't been charged in the case, said Commonwealth's Attorney Allen Trimble. She is in jail for failing to appear in court on an unrelated case.

Trimble alleges that the woman sold the baby for \$5,000 to a Michigan couple in a deal that was reached in Kentucky, where paying or being paid in an adoption procedure is illegal.

"We would not be handling the investigation if we did not believe the transaction occurred in Whitley County," Trimble said.

Authorities have neither identified nor charged the Michigan couple.

The Pioneer in Big Rapids said the Lake County Sheriff's Department recovered the baby Sunday. She is now in the custody of Kentucky authorities. From wire reports

## CAPITOL QUESTION

## Motorcycle helmets

Legislation will soon be considered in the Senate Judiciary Committee that would allow experienced motorcyclists 21 and older to ride without helmets.

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## MSU atom smasher remains on hold

## \$1B physics project not in U.S. budget — at least for now

By KATHERINE HUTT SCOTT  
State Journal Correspondent

WASHINGTON — A \$1 billion nuclear physics project that Michigan State University hopes to land is still on hold because of federal budget constraints, new Energy Secretary Samuel Bodman told Gov. Jennifer Granholm and others representing Michigan during a meeting Wednesday.

Granholm's communications director, Genna Gent, said Bodman offered "not much" hope

that his department would take the next step anytime soon of requesting proposals on how to build and manage the Rare Isotope Accelerator, which would be one of the world's leading nuclear physics laboratories.

Bodman "was very candid and said the president made the very hard decision to take (the accelerator) out of the budget and he has to support the president's decision," Gent said.

However, Bodman indicated that Congress — which decides how to spend federal dollars — could set aside money to move forward with the accelerator, Gent said.

Granholm and members of Michigan's congressional delegation will continue to lobby for

building the accelerator, Gent said.

Her account of the meeting was confirmed by Howard Gobstein, MSU's federal relations director, who attended the meeting along with others in Michigan's congressional delegation.

Bodman made it clear that for now the Energy Department would only spend small amounts on research on how to build the accelerator, Gobstein said.

The Bush administration last month proposed spending \$4 million on research in fiscal 2006 — the same amount it proposed spending for 2005.

A decision by the department to locate the accelerator at MSU would pump millions into mid-Michigan's economy.

The accelerator would hurl atoms at incredibly high speeds, creating isotopes that don't usually exist on Earth.

That could lead to new versions of elements that could be used to treat diseases, form new materials and benefit science in other ways.

Lawmakers for Michigan and Illinois have written the administration expressing their support for the project. MSU's main competition for hosting the RIA is Argonne National Laboratory in suburban Chicago.

Late last year, the Energy Department was preparing to issue

a request for proposals on the accelerator.

But as President Bush released his proposed 2006 budget, a top Energy Department official said no request would go out for at least four months — and maybe not for four years.

Raymond Orbach, director of the department's Office of Science, which would oversee the accelerator, said with the federal budget deficit projected to hit \$427 billion this year, the Energy Department asked its Nuclear Science Advisory Committee to reconsider the nation's priorities and give it advice on the accelerator.

Orbach said he hoped the advisory panel would come up with a recommendation by June.



Granholm

## Warden fights to keep open juvenile prison

## Proposed budget would close facility for young offenders

By JAMES PRICHARD  
Associated Press

BALDWIN — The outgoing warden of the Michigan Youth Correctional Facility says it would be a crime for the state to stop using the prison.

Gov. Jennifer Granholm's proposed 2006 state budget, announced last month, would trim \$50 million from the Department of Corrections. More than one-third of that savings — \$18.8 million — would result from canceling the state's contracts sometime this summer with The Geo Group Inc., a Boca Raton, Fla.-based prison-management company that owns and operates the maximum-security juvenile prison in south-central Lake County.

The inmates would be transferred to a state-run adult prison — the Thumb Correctional Facility in Lapeer — where they would be housed in a separate dormitory. Her plan also calls for closing four state-run prison facilities — Camp Sauble in Mason County's Free Soil, Camp Tuscola in Tuscola County's Caro, the Southwestern Michigan Community Corrections Center in Benton Harbor and the Buena Vista Corrections Center in Saginaw — for additional annual savings of \$6.1 million. All four are to close June 30.

Granholm is dealing with an estimated \$772 million shortfall in the \$8.9 billion general fund budget that takes effect Oct. 1.

Without the prison closings, the governor would have to find other ways to cut the \$24.9 million spent on the targeted prisons.

## Federal grant runs out

Until the current fiscal year, the state paid only a small portion of the cost of operating the juvenile prison, which opened in July 1999.

Michigan received a five-year federal grant that covered \$17 million of the expense each year through the budget year that ended Sept. 30, said Russ Marlan, a spokesman for the Michigan Department of Corrections. The Violent Offender Incarceration/Truth in Sentencing grant required a 10 percent match from the state.

Frank Elo, the warden of the juvenile prison, said his inmates get counseling and educational training that they wouldn't receive at an adult facility. Without it, many would spend the rest of their lives going in and out of prison, he said.

"We have all kinds of therapy and counseling programs," said Elo, who is stepping down to take a job as a criminal justice instructor at Ferris State University. "We have a high school GED program. We have special-ed teachers here. We have pre-GED teachers here. We have vocational education teachers here. We have social workers and psychologists on staff."

"I mean, we are very intensive on programming for these kids to help them turn their lives around. They ain't gonna get that at a level-five (maximum-security) state prison."

His goal is to turn as many inmates as possible into productive members of society, but many already have committed heinous



ADAM BIRD/Associated Press

**Guard on duty:** Inmates of the Michigan Youth Correctional Facility in Baldwin make their way back to their cells last week after lunch. Gov. Jennifer Granholm's proposed 2006 state budget calls for the facility to be closed.

## Youth facility

Some facts about the Michigan Youth Correctional Facility:

- Location: Baldwin, Lake County
- Opened: July 27, 1999
- Security level: Five (maximum)
- Beds: 480
- Population makeup: Males age 19 and under
- Employees: 230
- Operated by: The Geo Group Inc., a large, prison-management company

Sources: Michigan Department of Corrections, The Geo Group Inc.

crimes. Some are to remain behind bars for the rest of their lives.

## Dangerous inmates

Elo scoffs at the mention of recent news reports saying most of his inmates aren't the violent offenders that the prison was intended to house when it was being planned. He produces biographical thumbnails of dozens who are there because they murdered, raped or brutally assaulted adults or children.

The seriousness of their crimes is reflected in their surroundings. The prison is clean and high-tech on the inside, but the outside has two gun turrets and is surrounded by double razor wire.

A specially equipped Ford Ex-



**On the job:** Geo employee Douglas Libby opens and closes the doors for inmates last week at the Michigan Youth Correctional Facility in Baldwin. If the facility closes, the inmates would be transferred to adult prisons.

plorer that patrols the perimeter is referred to as an "armed response vehicle." There have been no successful escapes.

The prison has 480 beds and all are filled, Marlan said. Inmates range in age from 14 to 19 and skew older. This week they include 463 between 17 and 19 (they must be released or transferred to an adult prison when they turn 20) and 17 age 16 or younger.

The governor's office and legislative leaders are discussing many aspects of the state budget, including the proposed prison closings. There has been a movement to delay taking any

action against the youth facility until Sept. 30, the end of the 2005 fiscal year, but little is being said about doing anything beyond that.

Greg Bird, a spokesman for the Office of the State Budget, said closing the juvenile prison is a necessary cut.

"What we're housing there are prisoners that we could be housing at our correctional facilities, and we have open, available beds to accommodate that population," he said. "So we could pull those people back into our (state-run) prisons, cancel the contract and save the funds."

## Slaying: Authorities await ballistics test results

CONTINUED FROM 1B

and money.

Coker was shot to death, and a second, unidentified man remains in critical condition with a gunshot wound. Police have said it appears they exchanged gunfire.

Mason, speaking Tuesday from jail, said he was at home the night Coker was shot.

"I didn't have anything to do with this," Mason said. "I did know Martell. He was cool. He was young. We hung out."

All three suspects are cousins. On Wednesday, Lindsey was at Sparrow Hospital — but still in police



Allen



Lindsey



Mason

custody — and could not be reached for comment.

His attorney, Arjen Greydanus, declined to comment.

Franklin said Lindsey has a heart condition. Sparrow officials said police have requested Lindsey's condition not be released.

Authorities are waiting for ballistics tests to determine who fired the fatal shot at Coker.

Contact Kelly Hassett at 267-1301 or khassett@lsj.com.

## What's next

• A preliminary hearing for Lansing cousins David Allen, 22; Termaine Lindsey, 27; and Richard Mason, 23, is scheduled for Monday in Lansing District Court. A judge determines at the hearing if there's enough evidence against the men to advance the cases to trial.

## Granholm lobbies for military bases

## Governor, senators try to save state sites as closures weighed

ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — Gov. Jennifer Granholm made the case for Michigan's military installations on Wednesday, telling Defense Department officials that the bases offer unique attributes that serve as assets to the nation's armed forces.

Granholm joined Sens. Carl Levin, D-Detroit, and Debbie Stabenow, D-Lansing, in meetings with Defense Department officials as part of Michigan's strategy to protect its military facilities from an upcoming base closures.

"We can't go to them and say that the economic impact would devastate the state because every state is saying that same thing. We want to present the best business case for DOD and Michi-

gan," Granholm said. The Pentagon is evaluating installations that should be shut down and which missions should be relocated as part of a military cost-cutting and realignment plan. The proposed list is expected to be released to a nine-member independent commission by May 16 and a final decision could be reached later in the year.

Bases in Macomb County and Battle Creek are among the facilities being reviewed by the military. The installations provide more than 7,000 jobs, employ another 5,200 military personnel and led to other spinoff jobs surrounding the bases.

Stabenow said the state has "moved in the direction that the Department of Defense wants to go with the military, in terms of operating as a team ... (and) becoming much more efficient by coordinating."

Michigan has withstood painful reductions in its military presence in prior rounds. Four previous eval-

uations led to the closing of the Wurtsmith Air Force Base in Isosco County, K.I. Sawyer Air Force Base in Marquette County and the Warren Tank Arsenal in Warren.

Granholm and Stabenow said they stressed what the bases have to offer, highlighting the representation of all the service branches at Selfridge Air Force Base in Harrison Township, thousands of acres of training ground for bases in Alpena, Grayling and Battle Creek and the synergy between the automobile industry and the military in Macomb County's Army-Tank Automotive and Armaments Command.

Supporters of Selfridge have pointed out that the military has spent millions of dollars in improvements in recent years.

In Battle Creek, supporters of the Hart-Dole-Inouye Federal Center and the Air National Guard and Army National Guard bases have talked about the installation's role as the information technology manager for supply chain data.

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