

LAKE CITY, MICH.
WATERFRONT
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LANSING REPORT

BY REPRESENTATIVE

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MANDATORY SENTENCE

We're getting closer to mandatory prison sentences for those convicted of committing a felony with a gun. The Senate recently approved the bill and we are now asked to concur. As the Senate amended the bill, it would take effect January 1, 1977, and would require a two-year mandatory sentence upon conviction of a first offense, a mandatory five-year sentence and ten-year sentence upon a second or third and subsequent convictions, respectively.

Our version of the bill had no effective date. There is controversy over whether the bill will actually do what it is intended to do, deter crimes with guns. Some claim that it will act as a deterrent and cut down on the number of crimes committed with a gun. Others claim there is no proof that it will serve the purpose at all.

A Democrat senator offered a resolution to create a special committee to study the effects of mandatory sentences for certain felonious crimes. The committee would work with the Departments of State Police and Corrections and the courts to determine convictions and/or plea bargaining under the law, study similar laws in other states, rehabilitation and other matters. The resolution was referred to a senate committee.

Let me know your thoughts on mandatory prison sentences.

PCB LIMIT

With a concern for health and pollution, we recently passed legislation which would sharply restrict the use of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), a poisonous industrial chemical that has become a major pollution problem. The bill eventually would halt foreign manufacturers' sales of PCBs for uses that state officials say would lead to water pollution. Monsanto Company, the sole U.S. manufacturer of PCBs, has already limited sales voluntarily.

In humans PCBs affect liver function and can cause skin lesions. The chemical interferes with the reproductive processes of many animals, including birds, whose eggs may have defective shells if they consume even tiny amounts.

PCBs have been found in Lake Michigan salmon, I'm told, at levels four times the maximum allowed. Once the bill becomes law, the Department of Natural Resources says the PCB levels in fish would begin declining in as little as two years.

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