

## NEXT GENERATION OF LEADERS DESCEND ON LANSING



MATTHEW DAE SMITH/FOR THE LANSING STATE JOURNAL

Iris Tanya, a freshman at Loy Norrix, addresses the House Speaker on Friday afternoon during the Student Statesmanship Institute's mock Legislature program at the state Capitol.

# Mock Legislature tackles real issues facing the state

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Seventeen-year-old Philip Hammersley makes no ironclad assurance his generation will do better than the Washington lawmakers who may soon cause the nation to default on its debts.

But the Oakley teenager, who plans one day to run for elected office, will give it his best shot. "I can't guarantee we'll do a better job," Hammersley said. "I'm not sure what they are facing there. But I hope we will."

Hammersley was among 106 Michigan high students or recent high school graduates who attended the Student Statesmanship Institute's summer program at the Capitol this week. During the event, students either par-

ticipated in a mock Legislature, fictitious print and broadcast media outfits or mock gubernatorial elections.

James Muffett, president of the faith-based institute, said the program is designed to teach leadership skills and how government, politics and the media intertwine.

A mock Legislature of dozens of students, representing two fictional parties, sat Friday in the state House chambers, which were empty this week because lawmakers are on break.

The students debated current and past issues facing the state, including a repeal of the state's motorcycle helmet law, stem cell research and whether minors

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Luke Devine, a home-schooled ninth-grader, listens to House Speaker Hannah Hackel, of Fenton, on Friday during the Student Statesmanship Institute's mock Legislature at the state Capitol. Devine represented the "Madison Blue" team.

# Lansing State Journal

THE POWER OF KNOWING

## Students

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should be allowed to receive an abortion without parental consent.

Students took turns addressing their fellow "state representatives," including Betel Mulat, 18, of Lansing, who spoke in favor of repealing the state's motorcycle helmet law.

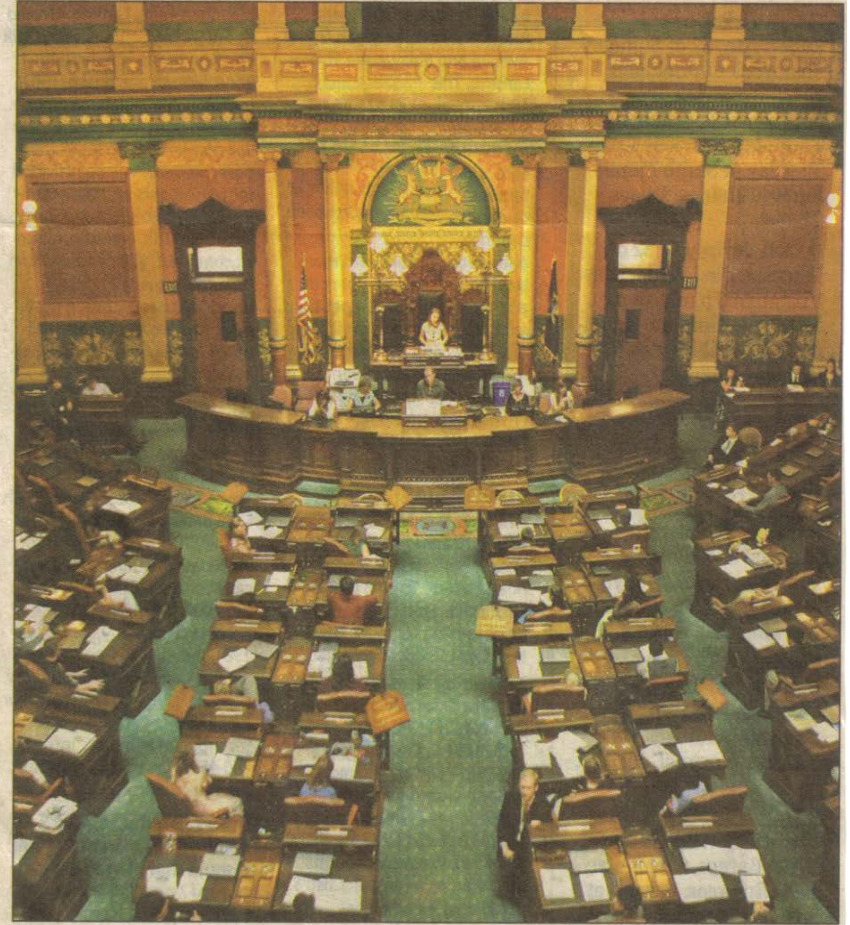
The Holt Lutheran High School senior said the week-long program has given her a boost of self-confidence, especially to her public speaking skills.

"It's been good for meeting new people and coming out of my eggshell," Mulat said.

Meanwhile, another group of students, including Hammersley, managed the campaigns of one of three fictional candidates for governor, who were named after real Michigan governors.

Hammersley's candidate, Epaphroditus Ransom (who served as governor in the 1840s), won after running on a platform opposing the recently passed national health care reform. Students from the program cast votes for their favorite candidate.

"It was a great experience," Hammersley said. "I got to pick a platform and run with it."



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Though the Michigan House of Representatives is still on summer break, it seemed as if it were business as usual on Friday afternoon in the Capitol's House chambers. Students from around the state had eight bills to introduce, discuss and vote on during the Student Statesmanship Institute's mock Legislature.

A final group of students served as print and broadcast journalists, covering

both the mock Legislature and the campaigns. They conducted interviews, pro-

duced a TV news segment and a daily newsletter, the "SSI Observer."