Gov. Jennifer Granholm paid her first visit to the area Wednesday since her election last November, stopping in Calumet, Hancock and Houghton.

The governor visited B-H-K Child Development Board in Houghton, announcing that the organization would receive an $840,000 grant to fund enhanced after-school and summer school programs.

"My hat is really off to them because they are always thinking creatively," she said.

B-H-K was one of 24 successful applicants under the state's recent 21st Century Community Learning Centers grant competition.

The grant will fund a program called Great Explorations to provide programs for Washington Middle School students and elementary and middle school students in Chassell, Dollar Bay-Tamarack City, Lake Linden-Hubbell and Stanton.

Rod Liimatainen, B-H-K's executive director, said the grant award is great news for the area.

"The 21st Century program will provide tremendous academic enrichment and youth-development activities for our area youth," he said, according to The Daily Mining Gazette.

The program, which may be funded for up to 4 1/2 years, will offer activities after school and during a summer day camp, including hands-on learning, tutoring and field trips.

Granholm also cut the ribbon on the first of three Michigan Tech EnterPrise Smart-Zone business incubators. A large crowd of business and community leaders attended the ceremony at the newly renovated Houghton powerhouse.

Granholm said the building will be a hub for new business in the state.

MARQUETTE, Mich. (AP) - The Marquette County Board will establish an independent task force to study the management and operational efficiency of the county road commission.

The board also decided Wednesday not to hold a formal hearing to consider removing Bob Menard as the county road agency's chairman.

The task force will analyze all road commission policies, practices and procedures for efficiency and effectiveness suggest any needed changes.
The seven-member panel will exist for no more than 90 days. Members will have expertise in road construction and maintenance, state Department of Transportation regulations and other relevant matters.

Commissioners decided the task force was needed after area residents and union members campaigned for Menard's ouster. A petition with more than 3,800 signatures was presented to the board last month.

Board members agreed there were problems with the road commission but said they were not all Menard's fault.

Menard said he welcomed the task force and considered it a good way to "clear the air" at the road commission, The Mining Journal reported Thursday.

HANCOCK, Mich. (AP) - City council members are worried about complaints of poor conditions at the municipal beach.

Michele Anderson, a Hancock resident, told the council the beach was getting dangerous. "It's an accident waiting to happen," she said Wednesday.

There is widespread littering, and children often swim to the center of the Portage Lake Shipping Canal amid boat traffic, Anderson said.

Some youngsters throw rocks and roughhouse on the shore, said resident Mark Carver, adding that he had seen youths attack each other and throw a bicycle off the dock into the canal.

"City council members do not get contacted very often, but people have been inundating me with complaints about the quote deplorable conditions of the beach," said councilwoman Mary Tuisku.

Mayor Jim Martin suggests the beach charge an admission fee. Councilwoman Lisa McKenzie said she preferred having the city's recreation committee draw up a plan for closer beach supervision.
A New Tune May Bolster the GOP

The controversy about trading music files over the Internet raises an opportunity for Republicans to show their commitment to privacy and limited government, while scoring points with Democrat constituencies.

By John Berlau
INSIGHT

The Senate Governmental Affairs Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations is seen not only as a stage for presenting and examining the great issues of the day but for advancing the careers of the nation's most ambitious political performers. From Harry Truman's hearings on waste and fraud in the defense industry to investigations of organized crime, union racketeering, communists in government and money laundering, this subcommittee and its select avatars have been known as the place to get action and lots of media attention. Service on this panel also has helped propel senators to higher office. Its Website [http://govt-aff.senate.gov/psi.htm] notes that alumni have moved on to prestigious posts such as U.S. attorney general, secretary of state and vice president. Three former members Truman, Richard Nixon and John Kennedy went on to the highest office in the land.

It therefore was with considerable interest to Washington insiders when the subcommittee's new chairman, Republican Sen. Norm Coleman elected in a tight Minnesota race against former vice president Walter Mondale after the death of incumbent Democrat Paul Wellstone announced that one of his first probes would turn up the heat on an issue that is not on the front burner of Washington's media elites. At least not yet.

On July 31, just before the Senate took its summer recess, Coleman announced that he will be looking into the practices of the music industry specifically, whether in its zeal to protect copyrighted material, the Recording Industry Association of America [RIAA] is abusing the power Congress bequeathed to it. The RIAA had on June 25 announced it was going to file "thousands of lawsuits" against individual consumers who download music off the Internet without paying. The copyright laws give the RIAA the power to sue for as much as $150,000 for violating copyright on even one downloaded song.

"I'm a former prosecutor and I believe in strict enforcement of the law, but I also believe in fairness and equity and common sense," Coleman says in an interview with Insight. "I want to measure what's going on here against those standards. If you're scooping up innocent people along the way, then you've got to take a look at that."

The RIAA is using power Congress gave to it in the 1998 Digital Millennium Copyright Act to serve more than 900 subpoenas to Internet service providers [ISPs] for the names and addresses of individual users. And, unlike other businesses, it doesn't have to file a lawsuit and get certification from a judge to issue subpoenas. It is even asserting the power of a "roving subpoena" similar to the authority which Congress created in the 2001 USA PATRIOT Act to catch terrorists who flee jurisdictions, says the NetCoalition's Kevin McGuiness. The RIAA suffered a setback in early August when a federal judge in Boston ruled that it did not have the power to issue roving subpoenas in Washington to be served on students at Boston College.

"This barrage of RIAA subpoenas is creating such a backlog at the U.S. District Court in the District of Columbia that the court has been forced to reassign clerks to process the paperwork," Coleman noted in a July 31 letter to RIAA President Cary Sherman. "According to the Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts, the D.C. District Courthouse is 'functioning more like a clearinghouse, issuing subpoenas for all over the country.'"

Along the way, the RIAA has angered several businesses and activist groups. Verizon Communications Inc., one of the Baby Bell phone companies and an ISP, went to court to try to prevent the RIAA from issuing subpoenas without judicial oversight, saying the privacy of its Internet subscribers should be paramount. Groups filing legal briefs supporting Verizon and its subscribers ranged from Public Citizen, founded by the "green" consumerist Ralph Nader, to the privacy-conscious Electronic Frontier Foundation to the conservative American Legislative Exchange Council. Among the concerns are what standards were used in picking the individuals to be subpoenaeed some have as few as five downloaded songs listed and how long the RIAA will hold on to the list of names. Although ISPs have been forced to hand over the names in the short
run, Verizon is appealing the case. Pacific Bell also has filed suit against RIAA, arguing that the massive subpoena power it asserts is unconstitutional.

In the meantime some conservative activists and GOP strategists see this issue as a chance for Republicans to show concerned Americans that they sometimes do take on big business and stand up for the consumer, particularly when the offending business is wielding government-granted power. Others see it as a wedge issue with which younger voters can be separated from celebrity Democrats in the recording industry.

For Republicans, "It's a great opportunity," says Rep. Chris Cannon [R-Utah], who frequently speaks out against the RIAA on this issue. "The real key for Republicans is recognizing where technology is going and helping out." Cannon serves on the House Judiciary Committee, which has jurisdiction over copyright issues. He tells Insight that GOP lawmakers should point out what he calls "the stupidity of an industry that ought to be courting customers instead of alienating them."

Also, some Republicans are grumbling about having to carry water for an industry that disproportionately funds Democratic campaigns and represents celebrities such as Barbra Streisand who attack and stigmatize GOP candidates and officeholders. For the 2002 election cycle, according to the Center for Responsive Politics, the prerecorded music industry gave $1,894,955 to Democrats and $618,866 to Republicans, a 3-to-1 ratio in favor of Democratic candidates.

Even so, say some on the right, there are more-complicated issues involved. In spring 2001, RIAA representatives received a strongly negative reaction from conservative activists at a meeting of Grover Norquist's Americans for Tax Reform. Lobbying on the payroll of the recording industry was former Montana governor Marc Racicot, who later would become a popular chairman of the Republican National Committee. He and industry representatives had pressed the case that conservatives should be fighting file-sharing services such as Napster because of the conservative belief in property rights. But many audience members, who typically include think-tank policy analysts as well as congressional staffers, weren't buying it.

"The reaction was of two types," recalls Fred Smith, president of the free-market Competitive Enterprise Institute [CEI], who was present at the meeting. "One of them was that there's a difference between intellectual property and regular property. The other was that the recording industry and Hollywood generally have been tools of the Democratic Party. A lot of the Republican activists there said why, in the name of God, should we be breaking our butts doing things that are politically unpopular to bail out Democrat-supporting industries who have never done a thing for us? They didn't have any answer to that at all."

To boost its image among Republicans, the RIAA recently replaced long-standing chairman and chief executive officer Hillary Rosen, a liberal Democratic activist, with Republican Mitch Bainwol. He had been chief of staff for Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist [R-Tenn.] and helped engineer the GOP's 2002 reatking of the Senate as executive director of the National Republican Senatorial Committee.

Mitch Glazier, a former Republican staffer for the House Judiciary Committee under Rep. Henry Hyde [R-Ill.,] recently made headlines when he proposed allowing the industry to destroy computers electronically that download copyrighted material. But tellingly, no Republican has signed onto an RIAA-supported bill in the House that would make copying even one copyrighted song on a peer-to-peer network a felony with a maximum sentence of five years in prison. The bill is sponsored by liberal Reps. Howard Berman [D-Calif.], Marty Meehan [D-Mass.] and John Conyers [D-Mich.]. Critics note that Conyers has expressed alarm about detaining
illegal aliens who might be part of terrorist cells but apparently sees nothing wrong with locking up American kids for downloading a song. Reuters recently reported that "a Conyers staffer said the bill has the backing of many Democrats but the Republicans had yet to endorse it." Glazier said he didn't know why the bill had no GOP support.

Democratic actions such as these that make their party appear to be in lockstep with the RIAA could be used by the GOP to reach out for atypical Republican votes. GOP strategists tell Insight. "You would think that Republicans would use this as a rare opportunity to prove to a constituency that might not otherwise be listening that government unchecked can be painfully invasive," says Rand Holman, an advance man for Ronald Reagan's 1980 presidential campaign whose The Rand Holman Show on New York City's WRTN-93.5 radio focuses on politics and performing arts. "They should have strategized on this a year ago."

One demographic group where Holman and others say Republicans could get more votes by fighting the RIAA is young adults. George W. Bush upset Al Gore in 2000 in part by doing better with this group than Bob Dole did in 1996, and Democrats are trying to woo them back. Both Coleman and Cannon say that college students they have talked to are afraid they'll be sued or arrested because they have downloaded a few songs. The RIAA has sent out stern warnings to college administrators urging that they monitor the downloads and uploads made by their students. In the spring RIAA filed suit against four college students it said were redistributing copyrighted songs. Joseph Nievelt, a junior at Michigan Technological University who interned at Microsoft last summer, was sued by the RIAA for a whopping $97.8 billion for running what it claimed was a "Napster-like" service that shared more than 600,000 songs. The RIAA settled with Nievelt, who said his program was more of a search engine such as Google.com, for a mere $15,000 which he will work the next few years to pay.

Michigan Tech's president sent the RIAA a strongly worded letter complaining that even after the university agreed to cooperate the group did not send Nievelt a "cease-and-desist" letter before saddling him with the lawsuit. Sentiment at Michigan Tech and on the other campuses hotly supported the accused students. There were rallies and fund-raising drives, and at Michigan Tech students put up a "free-music" tree adorned with burned CDs and anti-RIAA signs. According to John W. Coleman [no relation to Sen. Norm Coleman], a Koch Summer Fellow at Washington's conservative Heritage Foundation and a student at Rome, Ga.'s Berry College who is active with the campus GOP, "If conservatives could show they're concerned about these issues, they could receive great support from students."

Sen. Coleman says he's concerned about whether the punishments fit the alleged crimes. "I'm an ex-prosecutor, and you don't use the law to make examples; you punish people for what they did," he says. "You start yanking life savings from families whose 14-year-old is downloading a few songs, there's going to be a huge backlash. I'm doing [the recording industry] a favor" by holding these hearings. The senator says many teen-agers may not realize they could be breaking the law and "see trading music online the way my generation saw trading baseball cards."

And there is strong disagreement about the legality and ethics of downloading copyrighted music even among hard-core free marketers. CEI's Smith says networks sharing songs from compact discs people have purchased are no different, in principle, from copying a video or audiotape for a friend. "If they're selling it, the case for prosecuting is much stronger," Smith says. "But if they're just exchanging it among friends, even fairly liberally, I don't think the case is very strong at all today. That's always been fair use. They can't argue that the way to make people buy our goods is to throw them in jail if they find a way of borrowing it from their friends."

It's also not clear how responsible downloading is for the steep losses the record industry has reported in recent years. Insight has argued that the shallow, vulgar music the industry put out in the 1990s just isn't selling after 9/11, and that the industry should sign more artists who perform beautiful music and American standards, such as Norah Jones, whose debut album RIAA just certified as having sold 7 million copies [see "Still Music to the Ears," June 10-23]. Although a Hart Research poll commissioned by the RIAA appears to indicate a slight correlation between downloading and not buying as many CDs, many downloaders say they look only for hard-to-find music or that they can't find a service where they can buy only one song.

Sen. Coleman concludes that "the challenge is drawing a distinction between [first] clear commercial activity, second, the setting up of distribution networks, and third, personal use. I don't have the answer to that, but I'm certainly looking at those issues. I think part of [the music industry's] problem is they're playing catch-up" with the technology.

John Berlau is a writer for Insight magazine.
Comparison between university tuition and fee levels

The average cost, including tuition and required fees, for a 30-credit academic year for undergraduate students from Michigan at the state's 15 public universities:

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Source: Presidents Council of State Universities and the individual universities.