

School funding plan questioned

COLUMBUS (AP) — Gov. Richard Celeste and majority Democrats apparently have bipartisan support for a newly drafted bill that would earmark about \$80 million in excess lottery profits for Ohio's public schools.

But minority Republicans were saying, as lawmakers reconvened today following a seven-week recess, that Celeste's proposal stops short of giving all lottery profits to the schools.

Sen. Paul E. Pfeiffer, R-Bucyrus, who introduced a similar bill March 21, deplored a part of the Democratic measure that would put half of the unexpected profits into a "rainy day" fund for future school-funding emergencies.

He said 50 percent of future lottery surpluses would be similarly encumbered, and unnecessarily so.

"We really have a chance to do something dramatic for Ohio's school children," Pfeiffer said, adding that he hopes Celeste's bill, which was being introduced today in both houses, will be amended to give all the money directly to the schools.

Celeste said Monday the measure specifically provides that lottery profits ex-

ceeding projections for the current fiscal year will be earmarked.

Lawmakers had appropriated for the schools about \$200 million to \$250 million in estimated lottery profits, but current estimates show actual profits will be \$80 million more by the June 30 end of the fiscal year.

Celeste said it is the intent of his administration and the Legislature that "all lottery profits will serve Ohio's system of public education. The Ohio Lottery is more successful than ever before."

But the governor said the extra money will not go to the state's 615 school districts on a per-pupil basis for use as they see fit, as some state surpluses have in the past.

Instead, the money would be divided equally for two purposes, the first earmarked for the purchase of computers, textbooks and other instructional materials. These funds, distributed on a per-pupil basis, also could be used to pay 50 percent of the cost of emergency building repairs.

The second half of the \$80 million would be placed into an Educational Excellence Investment Account, a contingency fund for use in the event of future shortfalls in revenues for primary and secondary education.