



Michigan COMMENTARY

Michigan House of Representatives: New Members

by William R. Knox

Democrats maintain a substantial majority in the Michigan House, but their lead was diminished in last November's election from 64-46 during 1987-88 to 61-49 for the current session, a net gain of three for the Republicans. In the ten races in which incumbents were replaced, Democrats retained control of three seats and replaced one Republican. Republicans, however, retained two seats and captured four districts previously held by Democrats. In this report, we take a closer look at the newest members of the House and what they bring to their caucuses.

The in-coming freshman class is distinguished by the legislative experience of several of its members. Two freshmen previously served in the House; another was an aide to the former Speaker of the House; one, although elected on the same day as the rest, began 1989 as an incumbent; and two campaigned for and came close to winning House seats in 1986.

DEMOCRATS

Though none of the Democratic freshmen had served in the legislature before the November election, two began their 1989 terms with some legislative experience. Kirk Profit of Ypsilanti (22nd District) was an aide to former House Speaker Gary Owen for five years. Ted Wallace of Detroit (10th District) was sworn in right after the November election because he won a special election to fill the remaining two months of former Rep. Virgil Smith's 1987-88 term and a concurrent vote to represent the 10th District for 1989-90. (Smith won a special election to the state Senate in March.)

During the campaign, Profit, 36, emphasized his relationship with Owen and his legislative experience, noting that he had already developed a rapport with department heads and other legislators. He also had the advantage of Owen's endorsement.

Profit is a moderate Democrat who did not join the party until 1984. In fact, prior to working for Owen, Profit was an undersheriff for a Republican sheriff in Washtenaw County.

Profit supports funding schools with an increase in the sales tax. He also believes the state must do more to combat substance abuse, which he says is at the root of many social problems. "While we've had a pretty good effort on the enforcement side," he said, "we need to do something to beef up the prevention and treatment side. Otherwise, we'll be building prisons forever, and that's not much of a legacy."

An attorney with an undergraduate degree in philosophy, Profit takes a long view of society and its motivations. "We like to talk in terms of great strides and significant accomplishments," he says. "But really, if you took a macro look at what each generation does, they're successful if they keep the process going forward and turn the quality of life up a notch or two."

Having taken office in November, Ted Wallace, 46, has the most seniority of the ten members of the freshman class. An attorney with three children, Wallace says his main concern is the Detroit school system. "It is directly related to the two most serious problems, unemployment and crime," he said. "If we get a more educated citizenry, it will reduce unemployment and crime."

Wallace also says he'll work to bring more economic development to his area. "We have to look at ways to lower the disparity between Detroit and the suburbs," he said.

A native of West Virginia, Wallace has lived in Michigan since 1973. He easily won the general election against a Republican who campaigned on a theme of white supremacy and a member of the Workers Against Concessions party.

Gregory Pitoniak, 34, of Taylor (29th District) should prove to be a studious and deliberate legislator. He says he doesn't like to react impulsively. "My style is to study an issue," he said. "I will not simply appear on the floor and suddenly try to decide how to vote."

Holder of a bachelor's degree in urban studies and a master's degree in public administration, Pitoniak worked for the Wayne County Economic Development Corp. and served for three years as its executive director. Most recently, he was director of economic development for the Downriver Community Conference, a public nonprofit group devoted to the growth of the Downriver area.

Pitoniak says he'll strive to bring the public and private sectors together to improve the business climate and encourage commercial and industrial expansion. He'll also use his skills in the broader area of cooperation among governments. "Intergovernmental relations is something that I think I have a good feel for," Pitoniak said.

Pitoniak is not new to Democratic elective politics. He was elected to the Taylor City Council when he was 27 years old and is a past president of the Michigan Young Democrats and former treasurer of the Michigan Democratic Party.

Bart Stupak, 36, of Menominee (109th District) is an attorney and former Michigan State Police trooper. Stupak was legal counsel for the Michigan State Troopers' Association and was active in the union during his ten years as a trooper. Since leaving the state police, he has served as an arbitrator, representing management, and has been hired to teach at the state police training academy. "I have loyalties," Stupak said, "but they don't blind me to the point where I'm not a reasonable individual."

Although his district is over 400 miles from Lansing, Stupak says constituent service will be a major priority. Failing to stay in touch with constituents is one of the charges Stupak leveled against the incumbent he beat in November, Republican Jim Connors. Stupak says his constituents often feel alienated from state government. They also feel some allegiance to Wisconsin, especially since two of his district's counties share a border and a time zone with their neighboring state.

One of ten children, Stupak worked his way through college, completing a two-year law enforcement program in 18 months. He then served 18 months with the Escanaba Police Department, where he was the youngest officer ever hired. Stupak earned a law degree and passed the Michigan Bar while working as a state trooper.

REPUBLICANS

David Camp, 35, of Midland (102nd District) is an attorney, formerly of the Midland law firm Riecker, George, Van Dam & Camp. Although never before elected to political office, Camp has been active in the Republican Party, having served on the 10th (Congressional) District Republican Executive Committee, the Midland County Republican Executive Committee, and the Midland County Board of Canvassers. He is also a former precinct delegate. Camp was administrative assistant to U.S. Rep. Bill Schuette from 1985 to 1987 and managed Schuette's 1986 congressional campaign.

His work with Schuette gave Camp a taste of and an appetite for public service. Although he says he wasn't actively looking for an opportunity to run for office, one presented itself when Mike Hayes, the four-term 102nd District representative, announced he would not run for reelection in 1988. "Obviously the thought of public service had crossed my mind," Camp said. "When Mike Hayes decided not to run, I decided I could help and be an effective advocate for the area." Hayes, a Republican, endorsed Camp in the 1988 primary.

Camp emphasized jobs, education, and health issues during his campaign. He supports legislation that would reduce the cost of doing business in Michigan by reforming product liability laws and cutting unemployment insurance costs. Camp also would like to see the Single Business Tax reduced "because of its onerous effect on small business." He also favors protecting an individual's assets from depletion when a spouse is hospitalized.

Camp warns not to expect a lot of proposals and headlines from him at first because he wants to learn all he can about the mechanics of the legislature before he pulls too many levers. "There's a lot to learn, and I'm going to need to be informed before I jump in and propose something," Camp said. "I want to be sure that I've considered it in a careful and concerned way."

Providing perhaps the greatest contrast to Camp is **David Jaye**, 30, of Utica (26th District), an antitax crusader who, saying he wanted to "hit the road running," rushed to Lansing the day after the election to announce that he had requested legislation for an across-the-board 10 percent cut in property taxes.

A former mobile home salesman and Macomb County commissioner, Jaye also served on the executive board of the Macomb County Taxpayers' Association, where he conducted workshops to help people appeal property tax bills to their local boards of review. "We already have been successful in helping hundreds of people get property tax relief," he said, "but the real change is in the state law."

Aware that he runs the risk of acquiring a reputation as a one-issue legislator, Jaye makes no apologies for his dedication to reducing tax burdens. Jaye does have other interests, however, and has no intention of joining the "no caucus," the small group of conservative Republicans who vote against nearly all spending proposals. "I'm a very conservative person on social and economic issues," Jaye said, "but I'm also a realist; I'm a pragmatist."

Jaye favors a mandatory work requirement for able-bodied welfare recipients, is committed to preserving the integrity of the high school diploma by requiring competency tests for teachers and students, and helped circulate petitions proposing a constitutional amendment allowing the death penalty. He opposes abortion and the Equal Rights Amendment.

Jaye defeated incumbent Democrat Bill Browne in a rematch of 1986, when Browne survived Jaye's challenge by just 33 votes out of more than 22,000 cast. The acrimony of that race resumed and accelerated in the 1988 campaign, which began with name-calling and ended with Browne filing a libel suit against Jaye. Browne is expected to attempt to win back the seat in two years.

Nancy Crandall, 48, of Muskegon (97th District) also beat an incumbent Democrat on her second attempt. Despite spending over \$80,000 in the state's most expensive House race of 1986, Crandall came up short in her campaign against Debbie Farhat. Crandall blames her 1986 loss on the injection of abortion as an issue (she is pro-choice) and the lack of a strong Republican candidate at the top of the ticket. In 1988, Crandall beat Farhat by less than 1,000 votes. While promising to "do a heck of a good job" in the next two years to discourage any Democratic challengers in 1990, Crandall expects to face another tough and probably expensive race.

Crandall's priority in her first term will be economic development for Muskegon County, which has the second highest unemployment rate in the state. She also wants to protect pension plans from bankruptcy. She believes the answers to many business-related problems can be found in a less invasive state government and more individual initiative.

Crandall's background, training, and interest is in health care. With a degree in nursing and experience as a nurse and a nursing instructor, Crandall feels qualified to help state government meet health care challenges. "I see in the next ten years that issues dealing with health care will be facing us more and more," she said.

Crandall, who used to live near Detroit, is aware of some of that city's unique problems, and she is "certainly not willing to see Detroit go down the tubes." Nonetheless, she also is committed to representing her constituents, many of whom are less sympathetic toward the state's largest city. "The feeling here is that all the overwhelming benefits go to the Detroit area and that we're constantly bailing out Detroit for its inadequacies," Crandall says. "There are some things that the whole state benefits from and that we ought to provide assistance to. There are some other things that the city needs to clear up on its own."

Crandall says her constituents also perceive a bias toward Lake Huron in the Department of Natural Resources' salmon planting program. "I don't know if this is something that's going to require legislation or if it's just going to require a change in attitude at the DNR," Crandall said, "but that's one of the things I've been approached about, getting more salmon planted in Lake Michigan rather than Lake Huron."

William Runco, 32, of Dearborn (31st District) is one of this year's two returning freshmen. Runco served in the House from 1983 to 1987, when he gave up his seat to run unsuccessfully for the state Senate. He was elected minority whip his first term and served as vice-chairman of the Senior Citizens and Retirement Committee during his first two terms. Senior citizens' issues were prevalent in Runco's 1988 win over incumbent Democrat Agnes Dobronski, with Runco favoring exempting seniors from paying property taxes. Over 20 percent of the district's population is age 60 or older.

Runco also made crime an issue in the campaign, calling for tougher penalties for drug dealers. He says Dearborn's proximity to Detroit means higher crime and higher automobile insurance rates, two problems that he hopes the state can help solve. At the root of many of the state's problems, he says, is a

dependency on what he calls a perpetual system of support. "If we don't solve the welfare issue, we're still going to have a drug problem, we're going to have an educational problem, and we're going to have a lot of problems," he said. "There's nothing wrong with helping people. But if we're going to help them, let's really help them."

Runco is critical of Governor Blanchard's approach to welfare reform and other issues. "Our governor does not seem to want to solve tough problems," Runco complains. "He just likes to go around and cut ribbons. That's obviously a slam at him, and it's intended to be."

Runco, who introduced a lot of bills during his second term, says that is his style. "I have a policy," he says, "that if a constituent comes to me and is serious about changing a state policy, I'll introduce the legislation for him and push it." One bill that came to Runco that way passed in 1983. It provided individual retirement accounts with the same protection afforded to pensions against garnishment or attachment in lawsuits. Runco got off to a fast start in his third term, requesting legislation before he was even sworn in that would require the death penalty for first-degree murder.

The other returning freshman is Terry London, 48, of Port Huron (76th District). London held the 76th District seat from 1985 to 1986 after beating incumbent James Docherty. Docherty won the seat back in 1986, and London reclaimed it in 1988. He's expecting yet another rematch in 1990. "We have swung back and forth a few times, and I plan to end it," London says.

Before and between his legislative duties, London worked at Detroit Edison's Port Huron office. He was a customer representative work leader and was just short of his 25th anniversary with the company when he resigned at the end of 1988 to return to the legislature.

London says it is "atrocious" how the state has ignored business. He includes improving the state's business climate among his legislative priorities, along with lowering crime, fighting tax increases, and expanding foreign markets for agriculture. He says that to improve the business climate we need to reform workers' compensation and unemployment insurance laws and require workers to wait a week before collecting unemployment benefits. London has developed a new interest in solving solid waste disposal problems, since a landfill in St. Clair County was purchased recently by a company that hopes to import garbage from other states. "I want to keep New York trash out of here," he declares.

London emphasizes that he's no liberal, but he has had second thoughts about his earlier opposition to sanctions against South Africa. "The typical conservative Republican answer might be to stay away from that kind of stuff," he says. "But we have atrocities happening in that country, and I don't think they seem to be going away. I mean, tying people up to a tree and burning them is not my idea of the way things ought to be."

London, who worked on Richard Headlee's 1982 gubernatorial campaign, was also chairman of the St. Clair County Republican Party from 1986 to 1988. He recruited successful candidates for county offices and expects to play a role in Republican strategy for taking control of the House and capturing the governor's office in 1990.

Jan Dolan, 62, of Farmington Hills (69th District) took advantage of an open seat race made possible by the retirement of seven-term Republican Rep. Wilbur (Sandy) Brotherton. Though there was no incumbent to contend with, Dolan faced three others in the Republican primary, then survived a minor con-

troversy in the general election after she gave false information about her age. Dolan, who turned 62 on January 15, told the League of Women Voters and some newspapers during the campaign that she was 59. Coming clean before the election, Dolan said, "so much for the time-honored tradition of a woman's prerogative to change her mind, to not reveal her age or the true color of her hair. I must confess that I have two more years of life than previously published. All my years have been challenging and productive. I wouldn't have missed a single one."

Dolan, a former teacher, former Farmington Hills commissioner and mayor, and trustee of Botsford Hospital, served on several community boards and organizations. Her legislative interests are education, the environment, health care, and problems faced by the elderly.

Dolan operated a nonprofit day care center for frail elderly for five years before high insurance rates forced her to close it. She believes government should do more to encourage similar facilities, perhaps by allowing tax credits as it does for child care. "Some of the frail elderly can do very well with some assistance," Dolan says. "It's much more humane to give them that assistance than to put them in a nursing home and charge it up to Medicaid. They don't belong in nursing homes, and there's no alternative out there for them."

Dolan speaks of the need for greater cooperation among the governments in the metropolitan Detroit area. She says many of her constituents work in Detroit, and she hopes to foster a good working relationship with the city administration. "Detroit is an integral part of southeast Michigan, and it's important to keep the city viable," she says. "I'm an optimist that hopes that everyone works for the betterment of their entire state, not just their little jurisdiction."

NOTICE

The *1989-90 Michigan Government Directory* will be published in April. The new edition has been completely updated to reflect the results of the November 1988 election. In addition to expanded voting profiles for all legislators, new material has been added on the judiciary, education institutions, and county government. This edition will contain approximately 550 pages. Copies can be reserved by contacting Public Sector Consultants, 517/484-4954. Single copies are \$22.50 plus \$2.00 postage/handling and sales tax.