

FISCAL AWARENESS SERVICE



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A LETTER OF POLITICAL AND SOCIAL COMMENTARY

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MEMO TO: Clients and Interested Parties

SUBJECT: MICHIGAN'S AUGUST 7 PRIMARY ELECTIONS

FROM: Public Sector Consultants, Inc.

Michigan's August 7 primary elections are only two weeks away. National politics have eclipsed state politics and captured nearly all of the media space. The state contests have failed to inflame the passions of the voters, and voters are fairly blasé about them. There are only a few primary races for national office, including the Republican nomination for the United States Senate. U.S. Representative Siljander of the 5th Congressional district and Representative Crockett of the 13th both face opposition in the August primary but neither appears to be in serious difficulty.

The Governor and the State Senate serve for four years and will not be up for reelection until 1986. State Representatives serve for two years, and there are numerous primaries in the state's 110 representative districts. Incumbent Democrats seeking reelection face primary challenges in 31 of 59 districts, as do 10 of 44 Republican incumbents.

Voter turnout should be fairly comparable to that for the 1980 primary election rather than for the 1982 primary. The 1982 primary with 1.6 million votes cast was not strictly comparable to the 1980 primary with 1.175 million votes because the 1982 race included hotly contested bids for the Democratic and Republican gubernatorial nominations. However, it is always more difficult to predict results of primary elections, because turnout is generally low and crossover voting by partisans is unpredictable. This year, predicting outcomes, particularly in State House elections, is most difficult with a lower-than-normal turnout expected.

Issues have been of very secondary consideration in the increasingly bitter GOP primary fight between Jack Lousma and Jim Dunn for the right to face Democrat Carl Levin in November. Dunn's campaign rhetoric and radio ads have been among the harshest and most personal the state has ever seen. Lousma chose the high road, but that may be coming to an end as Dunn's attacks have evidently advantaged him. Dunn has managed to maintain his lead in the opinion polls even though Lousma enjoys strong party support and

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a considerable financial edge. This race could go down to the wire with civility going down with it. Though national GOP strategists believe the Levin seat is the most vulnerable Democratic Senate seat in the country, Michigan Republicans are not optimistic about the chances of either Lousma or Dunn.

Within the Republican Party, there is evidence of a continuing fight for the ideological soul of the party. Moderates have had to get accustomed to a less powerful and influential role. Lacking a coterie of leadership from the moderate wing, moderates have had to fight off the conservative challenge without the aid and comfort they have been used to. Conservatives within the party have been more concerned about righteousness than victory, and consequently have responded to policy issues and political problems in a more ideological and less pragmatic manner. This has created major problems and frustrations for those who seek victory rather than rectitude. Moreover, as ideologies have become more polarized, additional problems have surfaced, to wit, (1) a lack of respect for divergent perspectives, (2) a lack of trust regarding the true motivations and aspirations of the leaderships of the House and Senate and of the Democrats and Republicans, and (3) a seeming inability to understand one another or to acquire experience in the art of negotiation and consensus building.

Many of the 1984 state legislative races seem to be marked by an indifference to the issues and a concentration on personalities and parochial issues. While the campaign against Democratic Representative Mary Ellen Parrott in the 26th district centers around her vote on the state income tax increase, and the campaigns against Republican Representatives Paul Wartner in the 47th district, Charles Mueller in the 83rd, and Tom Power in the 104th focus on their support of Medicaid funding for abortions, they are the exceptions. Many of the other primary contests turn on relatively minor issues and highly personal factors. These generally involve challenges to incumbents from well-connected and ambitious people who have tired of waiting in the wings for an open district. This appears to be the motivation behind Jeffrey Padden's challenge from Joseph Palamara in the 30th district and Robert McGee's challenge from David Honigman in the 24th.

State Republicans are convinced that for the first time since 1967 they could gain majority status in the State House. They point out that conservative Democrats have been pretty much isolated in the blue-collar bastions of Macomb County and out-county Wayne. Macomb, in particular, has produced the most conservative Democrats. The conservatism of Democratic Macomb County legislators is probably the main reason Democrats have been able to hold all eight State House seats there despite the continuing rightward bent of its blue-collar voters. The two most liberal Democrats from Macomb, Mary Ellen Parrott and David Evans, narrowly won general elections in 1982 and will be strongly challenged again this year; Parrott may not even escape the primary. Just as the Solid South slowly started producing Republican Congressmen and Senators, so too Macomb

County may begin sending more Republicans, such as State Senator Kirby Holmes, to the Michigan Legislature.

Personalities

Primaries in State House races this year are far less influenced by issues and positions than by personalities. John Lauve, a leader in the recall and tax cut movement, is running in the Republican primary for the 14th Congressional district. Tom Ritter, former treasurer of the Headlee gubernatorial campaign, is a GOP candidate in the 6th Congressional district primary.

The son of Congressman William Ford, William O. Ford, Jr., is trying to unseat Democrat Vincent Joe Porreca in the 27th State House district; John Russell Gnau III, the son of the 1980 Reagan campaign head in Michigan, John Gnau, is trying to win a vacant seat in the Republican 65th district. The sister of State Representative Maxine Berman, Barbara Dismer, is seeking the Democratic nomination in the 67th district.

Several former legislators are making comeback bids: Josephine Hunsinger (1st district), Jack Legel (2nd), Warren O'Brien (25th), Vincent Petitpren (38th), Al Kramer (67th), James Constantini (109th), and Howard Carroll (75th), who may hold a record for the longest time period between candidacies. Carroll served in the House from 1943-44 and 1947-54.

Races to Watch

Difficult as it is to call winners in the primary elections, particularly two weeks before the election during which critical developments can occur, several primaries bear close watching. Despite the hard-hitting campaign of Jim Dunn, Jack Lousma is still the odds-on favorite to win the GOP U.S. Senate nomination, but Dunn is a scrappy streetfighter and could score an upset. In the 5th Congressional district, Paul Henry is favored to beat Keary Sawyer, son of the retiring Congressman, in the GOP primary, but the race could be very close. In the Democratic primary in the 11th Congressional district, Tom Stewart is likely to win the nomination and to go on to wage a strong campaign against GOP incumbent Robert Davis. Tom Ritter should handily win the GOP primary in the 6th Congressional district and should be a strong challenger to Democratic incumbent Bob Carr.

Of the 110 seats up for reelection in the Michigan House of Representatives, few could be considered at risk. For 85% of the state legislature, an August primary victory is tantamount to election. Democratic incumbents Jeffrey Padden and Joe Young, Sr. are being challenged aggressively and could be upset. Other Democratic incumbents facing strong opposition are Burton Leland, Mary Ellen Parrott, Robert DeMars, Vincent Joe Porreca, Justine Barns, Jelt Sietsema, Ethel Terrell, John Maynard, Raymond Murphy, Juanita Watkins, and Tom Alley. The most crowded legislative primary is in the Democratic 67th district, where Joe Forbes is retiring. Barbara Dismer has the best chance to win the primary but David Gubow and Albert Kramer should also run well. The following Republican incumbents are being challenged aggressively and could be upset: Jim Dressel, Ralph Ostling, Ernest Nash, and Robert McGee. Other Republicans facing strong opposition are Paul Wartner, Tom Power, and Charles Mueller. All other incumbents should be safe.

November Attractions

Among primaries without incumbents, several races bear watching either because the winner will most likely win in November or because the districts are marginal and are likely to be very competitive. In the 21st district, Lynn Owen and Roy Raker should win their respective races for a close match in November. In the 26th Republican primary, Mary Holmes and Doug Carl are in a very close race for the right to run in November for the seat now held by Democrat Mary Ellen Parrott. Maureen Keane Doran and Frederick Hoffman are in an interesting Democratic primary in the 31st district, with Hoffman the current favorite. In the 48th district, Floyd Oglesby should win the Democratic nomination and run hard against Republican incumbent Don Gilmer in the fall. Republican Nancy Douglas is expected to run a strong race to pick up the 109th district seat in the U.P. now held by retiring Democrat Jack Gingrass; the likely Democratic candidate for that district is Thomas Elegeert. In the Republican 35th district, Lyn Bankes and Steve Mitchell are locked in a close primary. Cecelia Fiery is leading in the GOP race in the 50th district for the right to face Democrat Michael Griffin. Republican John Russell Gnaul III is leading Judith Miller in the 65th district seat being vacated by Ruth McNamee. Jim Kosteva leads the field in the Democratic 37th district, where Edward Mahalak is retiring.

David Evans in the 72nd district will face a strong challenge from Republican Bob Perakis, and another Macomb County Democrat Ken DeBeaussaert will face an equally strong challenge from likely Republican primary winner George Furton. Republican Terry London is thought to be leading in his primary for the right to challenge Democrat James Docherty in the 76th district. In Kent County, John DeHaan is the likely winner and could be a strong challenge to Democrat Jelt Sietsema in the 94th district. In another Kent County district, the 92nd, where Republicans think they can pick up a seat, Republican Mary Milanowski and Democratic incumbent Thomas Mathieu are unopposed. Democrats feel that 97th district Republican Edgar Geerlings is vulnerable, and the likely opponent is Bob McCartney. In the long shot of the year, Colleen House Engler of the 99th district is likely to square off against Molly Bopp in a seat the Democrats would love to pick up, not only to gain the seat, but also to embarrass Colleen's husband, Senate Majority Leader John Engler. Democrats appear to be working conscientiously to keep the Englers fully occupied with the reelection campaign in Mt. Pleasant, while Republicans are working just as hard to ensure that House Speaker Gary Owen of Ypsilanti does not suffer from a lack of challenge in his reelection campaign.

The enclosed listing identifies the U.S. Senate, Congressional, and State House primaries that we believe to be of greatest interest. We have designed these comments for a small and special constituency. We hope these insights will of value to you. Our predictions in general election races will be forthcoming before November 6.

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