

'96 15th District special Senate primary

Sever: Pushing local issues

By BILL COUTANT
STAFF WRITER

Terry Sever plans to reconnect local issues with state policy if elected state senator from the 15th District.

"Local issues have not been strongly represented in Lansing," said the longtime Farmington Hills City Councilman and former mayor. "I don't think you can represent local issues well unless you've gone through the ranks."

Sever, 45, is a 30-year Hills resident who has been a city council member the past 11 years, including a 1989 stint as mayor.

Like many council members, Sever is a champion of home rule who has seen politicians make the mistake of not knowing where their constituents stand on the issue.

Sever said he's seeking no endorsements.

"The danger is that in accept-

ing money or endorsements it may be expected to influence you in some way if you are elected," he said. "I haven't owed anybody. I want the voters to decide, not money."

Sever is hoping his representation of Farmington Hills, which constitutes the largest block of voters in the huge district, will pay off in local support. But he is also walking West Bloomfield, South Lyon and the rest of the district.

Sever sees the current revenue sharing arrangement as unfair to this district.

"I don't believe Oakland County representatives have stood up for the residents in terms of what we pay and get back," he said.

This state's roads, and in particular Oakland County's, have been handled in terms of "crisis management," he said.

"We need a long-term plan of

15-20 years for roads," he said. "We need to take it to the people so that they can buy into it."

Sever favors some tax cuts, but doesn't favor what are advertised as cuts that wind up being "tax shifts."

"A lot of these shifts are really shafts," he said, adding that taxpayers in the Farmington School District are victims of a so-called tax cut.

Sever said the legislature and governor have a long way to go to "rebuild the partnership" with education that has suffered with rhetoric and tax policies that have hurt schools.

"Education is the most important issue," said the printing business owner. "It affects every other issue, including crime, economic issues and social problems."

Sever will work on election and campaign finance reform if elected.



Terry Sever
Sever and his wife Linda have three children. He has owned TL printing for 25 years and is past state president (1982) and past national vice president (1983) of the Jaycees.

Bullard: Bringing his track record

By BILL COUTANT
STAFF WRITER

Willis "Bill" Bullard Jr. believes voters want a track record before sending a candidate on to the next level.

The 38th District state representative is a veteran legislator, attorney and active member of the Chamber of Commerce, as well as other organizations. He is running in the May 13 Republican primary for the 16th District senate seat vacated by David Honigman.

"I've been in the House long enough that people know my record," he said. "Most senators were state reps first. They have that experience and track record."

Bullard's experience in state government: seven terms in the House and extensive leadership experience in the House Taxation Committee, Civil Rights and Women's Issues and Local Government and Public Utilities committees.

He also coordinated efforts leading to the development of Proposal A, which changed school funding in large part from a property tax to a sales tax base.

Although he's proud of his record on tax cutting, including sponsorship of four bills that cut taxes, Bullard, 52, sees other opportunities to change the tax structure to a more equitable one.

"I think that by mid-June we'll see a bill to change (state) revenue sharing to a per capita system," he said, adding that such a system will have to be phased in to lessen the ill effects on De-



Willis Bullard
Bullard also plans to continue his efforts at lowering taxes. He has sponsored four of the 21 tax cutting bills that have passed during Gov. John Engler's tenure and has supported them all.

Bullard said he will become a very familiar face in Farmington and Farmington Hills, which comprise the largest population of the district.

"You can ask the people I represent now," he said. "I'm known and they see me. If I'm elected, I'll be spending a lot of time here (Farmington and Farmington Hills)."

He plans to spend more than \$100,000 during the campaign and will combine extensive mailings, signs and will go door to door to get out his message.

Bullard and his wife Lynda are parents of three and are expecting a baby in July.

Dobb: Focusing on finances

By LARRY O'CONNOR
STAFF WRITER

If anything, five years in the state House has made Senate hopeful Barbara Dobb a realist.

Dobb, of Commerce Township, is one of four Republicans seeking the nomination for 15th District Senate seat in a specially-called primary election May 13. That leaves little time for pontificating let alone politicking.

Her answers reflect such urgency.

■ On why she's running for the Senate: "There's probably an obvious first answer, and that's term limits. I'm looking at two more years in the House and that's it."

■ About the gender issue: "I'm one woman in a race with three men. It's there. It's an issue."

■ On the importance of endorsements: "The most important endorsement is the voter's."

Dobb, 46, has represented the 39th District since 1991, winning it by one vote in the 1990 election.

She's been a player in the overhaul of the state property tax system, serving on the bi-partisan committee that led to Proposal A. Her background as a certified public accountant has served her as a member of the House's taxation Single Business Tax subcommittee.

Dobb is a member of standing House committees on public utilities, tax policy and joint legislative retirement boards.

She keeps in touch at home. She is president of Dobb and Company P.C. in West Bloomfield.

Among the groups Dobb is involved in are West Bloomfield, Lakes Area and Farmington Hills chambers of commerce.

merce, American Heart Association, Central Oakland Division and West Bloomfield Optimists.

Tax and welfare reform and crime will be at the forefront, she said. Dobb's specific on issues affecting cities — road repair, revenue sharing and unfunded mandates.

Dobb favors reconfiguring revenue sharing formulas to take in account population shifts, especially those incurred in the 15th District.

Oakland County legislators are trying to establish voting blocks with counties in similar predicaments, paying more in taxes than they receive in return of state money, Dobb said.

Oakland County has 13 House state reps and four state senators. "When you stack those numbers up, and you have everybody up to rob Peter to pay Paul you're



Barbara Dobb
going to have enough Pauls to take away from Peter," Dobb said. In terms of Department of Transportation, more cost-effective measures need to be examined, including privatization, Dobb said.

Cox: Steering clear of 'concrete agenda'

By TOM BAER
STAFF WRITER

Don't ask Ed Cox, Republican candidate for state Senate in the 16th District, for a firm agenda on what he'd do if he gains office. The Northville resident isn't running that kind of campaign.

"I have to confess . . . that I'm not running because I have a whole set-in-concrete agenda," said Cox, a 69-year-old retiree and one of four Republicans on the ballot in the May 13 primary.

"I would hope that I would be responsive and say in Lansing what the majority — and also the vocal minority — would want said regarding the issues."

The May 13 primary will eliminate three Republicans. The top vote-getter will then face Barry Brickner, the lone Democrat, in the June 4 general election ordered by Gov. John Engler to fill a vacancy created when Republican David Honigman resigned because of ill health.

Honigman, of West Bloomfield,

was elected to the four-year term in 1994.

Cox, a Northville resident since 1972, said there are times when state government has not been responsive to the needs of local residents, but he's not condemning anyone.

"I feel uncomfortable making all-or-none statements," he said. "I would judge that in terms of 'Have they struck out more than they've gotten hits.'" Cox said he was unable to answer that question.

Lack of state money to repair roads in his part of Oakland County is an issue with Cox. "I see some real potholes," he said. "That's really the only thing I have strong feelings about."

Describing his political and social bearings, Cox said, "I'm a moderate. Given two words to describe myself, I'd say I'm a liberal-conservative and more conservative than liberal."

Cox and his wife Sharon are the parents of two grown daughters.



Ed Cox
things," including stints as an educational consultant for intermediate school districts. Cox, who holds an undergraduate degree from Houghton College in upstate New York and a master's degree in family counseling from the University of Michigan, is a founding member of the Plymouth Christian Academy.

Brickner: Wanting his tax money back

By TOM BAER
STAFF WRITER

Barry Brickner, candidate for the state Senate in the 16th District, hasn't put up a sign, done mailing or knocked on a door. And he'll still win the May 13 primary.

The only Democrat in the partisan race, the 44-year-old Farmington Hills attorney is cleared to the June 4 general election where he'll face the winner of the Republican primary.

Brickner, a member of the Hills Planning Commission, has some firm ideas about how power flows concerning state government and the needs of the folks back home.

"It works from the bottom up," he said, "not from the top down." Brickner will build his campaign around home-rule issues. He calls them "tax-and-send issues." For example, on revenue sharing (or the lack of it), he said: "Oakland County puts more money into the state coffers than any

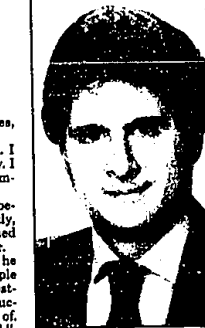
other county. Out of 83 counties, we're 82nd in getting it back.

"I want my money back . . . I want it spent on my community. I want representation for my community."

There's been some not-so-benign neglect by the state recently, especially under just-resigned David Honigman, said Brickner. "Why are they ignoring us?" he asked. "We have a lot of people here . . . this is one of the fastest-growing counties. Our infrastructure needs to be taken care of. Those potholes have to be filled."

He also has some concerns with state involvement in education. "Let the state set the standard with the core curriculum," he said, "and let the local boards determine how we're going to meet that standard."

Brickner's been a precinct delegate since 1968, and ran unsuccessfully for state representative in 1990. Why is he running now? "I'm in the law, I like to write



Barry Brickner
and I represent people," said the solo practitioner. "That's what I do for a living. What do they do in the legislature? They write law." Brickner, a Michigan State University graduate, earned a juris doctor from Cooley Law School. He writes and edits a publication for the American Bar Association.



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