

SEN. ROBERT GRIFFIN
"Be united"L. BROOKS PATTERSON
Leadership issue

Griffin returns fire at his taunting rival

By MICHAEL MATUSZEWSKI

Michigan's tax revolt, the public's apparent turn to conservatism and the Republican Party's "dream ticket" have U.S. Sen. Robert Griffin looking forward to November.

"The people are more in tune with Republican philosophy than anytime in my 22 years in Washington," said the two-term senator from Traverse City.

In an interview with Observer & Eccentric staff members in their Birmingham office, Michigan's senior senator for the first time commented on charges by his only GOP rival, Brooks Patterson.

"Griffin, however, warned that Republican fortunes hinge on its ability to maintain a united front."

"When you consider that there are more Democrats than Republicans and many more independents than Democrats, it's not smart for a party to divide up more than necessary. We must be as united as possible."

"I followed that campaign philosophy in 1966 when I ran against (G. Mennen) Soapy Williams and in 1972 when I ran against Frank Kelley. It has worked out well," Griffin said.

UNLIKE OTHER members of the Republican Party's "dream ticket"—Gov. William Milliken, running for reelection and Eastern Michigan University president James Brickley running for his old job as lieutenant governor—Griffin is facing an intraparty confrontation with Oakland County Prosecutor L. Brooks Patterson.

On paper it has all the makings of a great battle—the crafty incumbent, former President Gerald Ford's right hand man facing off against the feisty Patterson.

"Griffin refuses to come out fighting, though."

Patterson, time and again, has offered to debate "the issues" with Griffin.

"I don't think it would be smart," Griffin said.

PATTERSON HAS challenged Griffin's voting record, campaign promises and leadership abilities. Usually, though, Griffin and his staff have all but refused to respond to Patterson's accusations.

Earlier this week, while campaigning in Oakland County, Griffin took some time to rebut the prosecutor's charges.

"If you're one of two Republicans in the Senate considered for the top party leadership position, certainly someone in Washington thought that Sen. Griffin had leadership ability," he said.

"The president (Ford), caught in the middle of a tough political fight, picked me to be his floor manager at the Republican National Convention. He must think I've got some leadership ability."

EARLIER, PATTERSON had criticized Griffin's handling of the Panama Canal treaties. He said the senator, who became one of the treaties' most vocal opponents as the time for ratification approached, was actually very ineffective in stopping or changing the treaty in the senate's foreign relations committee.

In response Griffin said, "I don't control anybody else's vote down there."

"The senate is controlled almost two to one by President Carter," he said.

"I cannot or should not be expected to answer for the votes of others," Griffin concluded.

No difference between the candidates?

Three Democratic U.S. Senators are doing all they can to crack that notion.

In addressing the Greater Detroit Chamber of Commerce at the Detroit Athletic Club earlier this week, former Detroit City Council President Carl Levin, State Rep. Paul Rosenbaum (D-Battle Creek) former Congressman Richard VanderVeen of Grand Rapids showed how varied their views on tax limitation were.

Levin, one of Detroit's most powerful politicians, said he'd support the proposed constitutional amendment limiting state taxes only if a better plan could not be worked out by the state legislature.

Rosenbaum, who is courting the conservative Democratic vote, said he will go all the way with Richard Headlee and Taxpayers United for Tax Limitation.

VanderVeen, who was recently endorsed by the Michigan Education Association, spoke out against both the Headlee tax limitation amendment to the state constitution and Robert Tisch's more drastic property tax-cutting plan.

Candidates Philip Power, publisher of the Observer & Eccentric newspapers, State Sen. Anthony Derezinski (D-Muskegon) and State Sen. John Osterbacher (D-Grand Rapids) did not attend the meeting.

HEADLEE'S PROPOSALS are reasonable," Levin said. "But there are a number of problems."

"What's going to be the impact of

CARL LEVIN
For Headlee—ifPAUL ROSENBAUM
No ifs, ands or buts

the tax limitation amendment on the state's rainy day fund?" he asked.

"What's going to happen to the Plant Rehabilitation Act? It's too important an act to be jeopardized."

"What's going to happen to the bonding authority of cities?" he asked.

To overcome the tax limitation plan's shortcomings, Levin encouraged the legislature to come up with its own ballot proposal that would limit taxes, but would also preserve the ability of the state and cities to negotiate with companies in attracting them to Michigan or to try to keep them in the state.

VANDERVEEN, LIKE Levin,

pointed to the same drawbacks in the tax limitation proposal.

Instead, he favors another proposal, "an amendment to the Headlee proposal," that would reduce residential property taxes by 40 per cent. To recover the lost revenues, he proposed nearly a one per cent increase in the state income tax.

"I'm in favor of the philosophy," VanderVeen said, "but the experts keep telling us that there are real problems with the tax limitation proposal."

He called his proposal "a more reasonable way to support the righteous outcry of the people for some relief."

All three candidates panned the Tisch amendment, which would cut property taxes by 50 per cent.

Levin also asked that the legislature write provisions which would allow it to shift the tax burden for the "much hated, unfair," property taxes to the state income tax. He said it could be done while still retaining the limitation target of 8.3 per cent of the state's total personal income.

"Let's give it a fling. If we fail in the legislature, it will still have been in the best interest of the people to have tried. Even though we can do better in the state legislature, if we don't let's get behind Headlee," Levin said.

ROSENBAUM SAID he needs to win the battle in the "1-75 corridor"—Oakland County, western Wayne County, Flint, Saginaw and Bay City. He called Headlee's proposal the only reasonable tax reform plan to be on the November ballot.

"I'm 100 per cent in favor of Headlee, no ifs, ands or buts," Rosenbaum said. "I was supporting Headlee before California (approved Proposition 13). I only got involved in politics because I was displeased with my property taxes," he said.

"With tax limitation, zero-based budgeting and sunshine provisions, the state government can at least begin to understand what real budgeting is all about," Rosenbaum said.

Criticizing Levin's stance, the Battle Creek candidate said, "You can't say you agree with Headlee and still back the legislature. It's a totally different ball game."

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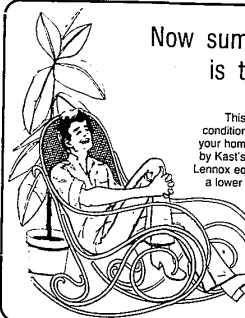
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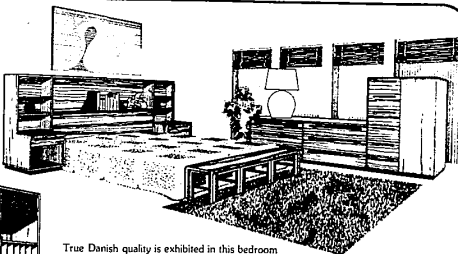
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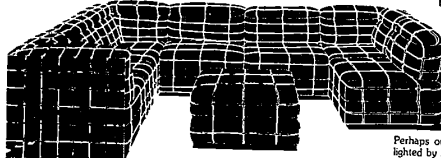
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