

Wants to be governor
Blanchard's run is now official



James J. Blanchard
"teamwork"
Rep. James Blanchard: "This year it will be worse. One out of 10 people is on welfare, and the number is growing. We must face facts. America's recession has become Michigan's depression. No one is going to save us but us."

By Suzie Rollins Singer
staff writer

More than 200 people crowded into the Pleasant Ridge Community House Monday to hear home town Rep. Jim Blanchard formally announce his candidacy for the Democratic nomination for governor.

The 39-year-old four-term congressman was at home in the 18th District. Audience chatter produced such comments as, "Local boy makes good," "It'll be nice to know the governor" and "He still looks as handsome as he did years ago when he knocked at my door during his congressional campaign."

PLAGUED by a cold and his voice hoarse, Blanchard told the group he has the knowledge to "turn Michigan around financially."

He rebuffed the disturbing 16 percent state unemployment statistic. He mentioned the 20,000 businesses that went bankrupt last year. He didn't promise miracles. He said tax hikes appear imminent.

"This year it will be worse. One out of 10 people is on welfare, and the number is growing. We must face facts. America's recession has become Michigan's depression. No one is going to save us but us," Blanchard said.

WHEN ASKED about Gov. William Milliken's plan to raise income taxes from 4.6 to 5.3 percent, while simultaneously cutting the budget, Blanchard said:

"Milliken's plan might work, but I believe we're in a more serious state than the governor is letting on to."

"Since 1975, Michigan has had a serious cash flow deficit. One-tenth of a percent of income tax (Milliken's figure for cash flow improvement) is not sufficient to eliminate the deficit," he added.

Blanchard said the auto industry will never bounce back

to past levels, and displaced auto workers should be re-trained to work in other manufacturing jobs.

BLANCHARD PROMISED to make Michigan attractive to manufacturers and farmers alike.

"In Michigan, we have the resources to recover. But we need the leadership to make them work," he added.

Noting that 15 other candidates are vying for the state's top office, he explained why he should win.

"I am the only candidate in either party who has been seriously tested by a tough economic problem — the Chrysler situation — and I passed the test," he said of getting the government-backed loans.

In addition he is the only candidate who has worked in both Lansing (in the attorney general's and secretary of state's offices) and in Washington.

IF ELECTED, Blanchard said he will call together leaders of small and large businesses, labor, agriculture, education and local governments to hammer out a strategy for Michigan's future.

He said he would institute a massive job training and re-training program, develop a strategic investment program to create jobs and diversify the state's economy, and review all state laws and regulations, including tax laws, to straighten out Michigan's finances.

He said he is committed to saving the state's higher education institutions from budget cuts.

"Our colleges and universities are the building blocks for our future, and we must protect them," he added.

Before closing his 30-minute speech, Blanchard said the only way out of Michigan's depression is through teamwork.

"No region or group can expect to get 100 percent or even 80 percent of what it wants from our state government or our governor. Good leadership must be something more than the sum total of the demands placed upon the leader," he said.

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