

# Open Meetings suit threatens Headlee

By Suzie Rollins Singer  
staff writer

The case of the Michigan attorney general against the Oakland University Board of Trustees will be heard by Oakland Circuit Judge Alice Gilbert at 1:30 p.m. July 28, just two weeks before the primary election.

The question: Did OU trustees violate the state's Open Meetings Act when selecting its president, Joseph Champagne?

The political significance: Richard Headlee, chairman of the OU board, is seeking the Republican gubernatorial nomination Aug. 10.

ATTORNEY General Frank Kelley, who filed suit against the trustees Nov. 7, 1980, charges their closed-door interviews of presidential candidates violated the Open Meetings Act.

The hearing has been postponed several times. The attorney general is seeking \$500 in civil damages from each of OU's eight trustees. While there are both Democrats and Republicans on the board, the most politically potent name is Headlee's.

Headlee was appointed to the board by Gov. Milliken. After Headlee delivered blistering criticism of his policies, the governor said about he was sorry he had ever appointed Headlee to the post.



Richard Headlee is one of eight Oakland University trustees being sued by the attorney general for allegedly violating the state open meetings act.

action of individuals or groups of less than a quorum of members of a public body. It only regulates meetings consisting of a quorum."

Assistant Attorney General Deborah Devine, however, argues that the group deliberately circumvented the law by breaking into small committees, each less than a quorum, and meeting simultaneously in the same building to conduct interviews with presidential candidates on Oct. 17 and 18, 1980.

"The defendants, with the advice of their counsel, subdivided into two groups of less than a quorum to conduct interviews to avoid the requirements of the Open Meetings Act," her brief said.

COURT DOCUMENTS state that on Dec. 6, 1980, six members met in a closed session to discuss the final selection of president. Three days later, a public vote was taken, with the same six members who attended the closed session voting to hire Champagne.

The Open Meetings Act, Kelley maintains, says public bodies must hold interviews with candidates for public office in an open meeting.

Howelett argues that all of the candidates for the university presidency requested confidentiality.

But Devine's brief countered: "We're talking about a \$70,000-a-year public office and the public interest is strong."

A spokesman for Kelley said that while many complaints about violation of the Open Meetings Act come to the attorney general's office, the complaint from OU was selected because it is a state-wide institution and because the OU board's violations have been flagrant.

THE TRUSTEES' attorney, James Howelett, of Bloomfield Hills, maintains that because the trustees met in small groups of less than a quorum, they were not bound by the Open Meetings Act. In briefs submitted to Judge Gilbert, Howelett said, "The Open Meetings Act does not regulate the

## Genetics group to meet Aug. 7

The Osteogenesis Imperfecta Foundation will host a group meeting Aug. 7 at Henry Ford Hospital, Detroit.

The foundation's purpose is to dispense information to OI patients, their families and members of the medical profession.

OI is a genetic defect with numerous variations. The most common characteristic is fragility of bone, commonly referred to as "brittle bones."

Other signs include loose joints, sweating, poor teeth, deafness, short stature and — often times — blue sclera.

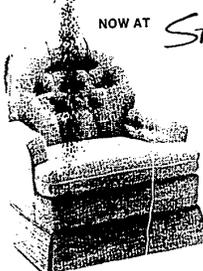
Registration for the program begins at 9 a.m. in the Buerki Auditorium, first floor Clinic Building of the hospital at 2799 W. Grand Blvd.

Dr. Neil Marcus, orthopaedist; Dr. Robert Norum, geneticist and Dr. Michael Kleerekoper, bone and mineral metabolism specialist will lead discussions.

Lunch will be served, and there will be films and a panel discussion.

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Note: In a few instances, location is temporary and for this event only.