

Jobs the problem, but Dems differ on solutions

Democratic candidates for governor all say unemployment is Michigan's No. 1 problem. They all say reform of the state's tax laws and compensation payments are desperately needed to turn the economy around.

But they differ when it comes to what government's role should be in helping Michigan businesses dig out of the slump.

Seven candidates vying for the Democratic nomination for governor in the Aug. 10 primary responded to a state League of Women Voters questionnaire.

FORMER STATE SEN. William Fitzgerald, Sen. Kerry Kammer and Sen. Ed Pierce say they support reforming unemployment and workers compensation rules and the state single business tax as methods for bringing Michigan out of the recession. Zolton Ferency, an Ingham County Commissioner, said he favors increasing capital investment opportunities for diversified business and industry.

But U.S. Rep. James Blanchard wants to develop strategic investment and massive job training programs to help the unemployed get back to work, in addition to asking business and labor to meet for cooperative suggestions for jobs.

Sen. David Plawecki mentioned a five-point plan, but revealed no details.

Lawyer John Safran said repeating the single business tax would solve the state's economic problems.

THEY DIFFERED entirely when asked their opinions of the state's second biggest problem.

Blanchard said it's the state's fiscal problems. In order to alleviate them, he recommends an independent financial audit, returning to sound accounting principles and developing a four-year financial

Financial planning

Seminar on Aug. 4

Columist Sid Mitta will hold a free financial planning seminar at 8 p.m. Aug. 4 at the MSU Management Education Center, 811 W. Square Lake Road at Crooks, Troy. Seating is limited to 50 people. Preregistration is necessary by calling 643-8880.

The seminar is designed to help people better appreciate the use of financial planning and how it can help them achieve their goals.



James Blanchard, 39, congressman from Pleasant Ridge.



Zolton Ferency, 59, Michigan State University professor of criminal justice, of East Lansing.



William Fitzgerald, 40, attorney, of Grosse Pointe Farms, former state senator.



Kerry Kammer, 33, state senator from Clarkston, former Pontiac city clerk.



Edward Pierce, 52, state senator, former Ann Arbor councilman.



David Plawecki, 34, state senator from Dearborn Heights.



John Safran, 74, an attorney and minister of Clifford.

(no photo available)

stability budget plan.

Kammer targets the state's education system as the number two problem and wants its funding to be restored as a top priority for state spending.

Plawecki wants to stop continual tax increases, while Safran and Ferency, want to combat crime. Safran also said he's committed to cutting real estate taxes by 25 percent.

WHAT INCENTIVES should the state offer businesses?

Fitzgerald, Pierce, Kammer and Plawecki came up with the same answer: Michigan must reform its compensation laws to make it competitive with other states.

Ferency would like to base business taxes on profits, not gross receipts, and Safran would like to repeal the single business tax entirely.

Blanchard went into detail, saying he wants to create an investment bank to attract leverage for private investors, review state business regulations and design a program to provide increased ventures for capital formation.

NO ANSWERS were alike when it came to changes candidates would make in the Michigan tax system.

Blanchard favors expanding the homesteaded property tax exemption and lowering the percentage of income threshold; increasing the small business exemption of the single business tax; and providing credits or rebates to small businesses for unfair

unemployment compensation penalties.

Ferency wants to provide property tax exemption to homeowners equal to the average price of a home; raise the sales tax but give income tax credits; and change to a graduated-rate income tax.

Fitzgerald wants to reduce property taxes by placing a ceiling on the annual changes in home assessments; reducing school millages by 25 percent; excusing senior citizens from paying school taxes; and increasing the sales tax by one percent.

Kammer supports reducing property taxes, and Pierce favors basing business taxation on ability to pay.

Plawecki said he would again oppose state income tax increases.

Safran said he would cut real estate taxes.

CANDIDATES APPEARED to agree on the greatest threats to the state's natural resources.

Blanchard, Ferency, Kammer and Plawecki said that toxic wastes are the greatest threat to Michigan. Blanchard said new management is needed in the state Department of Natural Resources.

Contamination and preservation of the Great Lakes ranked high on the candidates' lists, with Blanchard, Ferency and Pierce targeting the issue.

Fitzgerald called bureaucratic failure to enforce environmental laws the greatest threat to the state's natural resources.

Safran said the excessive use of herbicides, pesticides and fertilizers is a threat.

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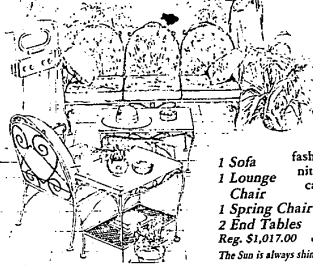
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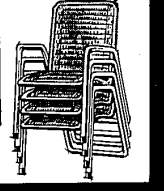
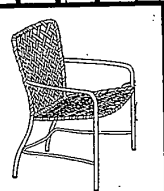
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