

Blanchard takes all-Oakland race

By Suzie Rollins Binger
Staff writer

Oakland County voters favored Republican Richard Headlee in the first all-Oakland contest for governor, but Democrat James Blanchard carried the state with 54 percent of the vote.

In the home county, Headlee, a Farmington Hills insurance executive, took 52 percent of the vote, while Blanchard, a congressman from Pleasant Ridge, garnered 48 percent. The final Oakland tally was Headlee, 184,055 and Blanchard 167,252.

Blanchard, 40, will be the first Democrat to hold the executive office in Lansing in 20 years. He led his party to a sweep of all state-level offices. Democrats will control both houses of the Michigan Legislature and picked up one congressional seat.

IN A VICTORY speech at the Sheraton-Southfield hotel, he said he would work with his "good friend" Gov. William Milliken during the next 60 days to make the transition as smooth as possible.

"We've got tremendous work to do. There's been a major shift in power," Blanchard said. "The Michigan's governor's job is the toughest job in the nation."

As thousands crowded the Grand Ballroom to applaud Blanchard and his 70-year-old running mate Martha Griffiths, the Red Garter Band played all-American tunes, and hot dogs were served.

Blanchard's press secretary Betty Howe attributed the win to "positive campaigning."



Richard Headlee, Republican nominee, greets crossfallen supporters in the Michigan Inn, blaming news media for his defeat.

"We decided early in the year to run a positive campaign, and we stuck to it throughout the state," she said.

As the campaign closed in, Howe said she had some concerns about the impact of "negative and false advertising."

"But we never swayed away from our positive approach," she added.

HEADLEE, 52, at his election headquarters in the nearby Michigan Inn, blamed the news media for his loss, claiming reporters were responsible for making major issues out of his statements about the Equal Rights Amendment. Headlee had criticized some supporters of the ERA as "proponents of homosexual and lesbian marriages."

Headlee, who upset Milliken's lieutenant governor, James Brickley, in the primary, also blamed "Milliken moderates" for supporting Blanchard.

"They didn't like what they saw, so they just picked up their marbles and went home," Headlee said.

Although he didn't publicly concede until the morning after the election, Headlee said there was "no way he would be back" in politics.

However, his running mate, former state Supreme Court Chief Justice Thomas Brennan, 53, said he is anxious to return to a campaign trail.

"I loved campaigning and so did my wife. We'll be back," he said.



Governor-elect James Blanchard and wife Paula greeted an enthusiastic throng in the Southfield-Sheraton Inn.

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