

Blanchard recall petition drive wins green light

By Carol Axizian
staff writer

The campaign to recall Gov. James

J. Blanchard is gaining momentum, according to the Grosse Pointe Woods engineer who won the legal right this week to launch the drive.

"Support for this is spreading like a bonfire," said John Lauve, a former Republican legislative candidate.

Lauve and the recall supporters are angry about the recently passed 38-percent state income tax increase. Lauve is spearheading what is believed to be the first recall aimed at the governor's office.

"WE HAVE about 200 volunteers already, but we need at least 500 before we can begin circulating petitions," Lauve said.

Lauve already has appointed more than 10 chairpersons from various counties to lead local efforts. He's moving ahead with plans for a rally he hopes will draw 5,000 supporters.

And he's selling T-shirts that say "Recall Blanchard" to raise money for his campaign.

Lauve admits he faces an uphill battle. But he remains undaunted by the monumental task of gathering 760,000 valid signatures (25 percent of the 3,040,000 total votes garnered by 1992 gubernatorial candidates). He must collect the signatures within 90 days to get the recall on the ballot.

"If we can organize this and get enough volunteers, there's no question Blanchard will be the ex-governor by November," he said.

LAUVE RECEIVED approval for the wording of his petition Monday from the Oakland County Election

Commission. Under state law, the Oakland body had jurisdiction because Blanchard is an Oakland resident.

The election commission conducted the hearing before more than 50 recall supporters — some of whom came from as far away as Saginaw. The three-member panel consists of Clerk Lynn Allen, Treasurer C. Hugh Dohany and chief Probate Judge Norman R. Barnard.

Blanchard can appeal the commission's decision in Oakland County Circuit Court within 10 days. The governor's press secretary, Sue Carter, said he hasn't made that decision yet.

Blanchard, who was represented by a Lansing attorney at Monday's hearing, had requested the hearing be delayed because he didn't have enough time to study the petition.

The governor was away on a Caribbean island vacation when the petition was filed on April 8 and didn't receive notice of it until April 14, said Tom Downs, the attorney.

BUT THE election commission ignored the request. The commission said Lauve could move ahead with his efforts because his petition was clearly worded.

The petition says the governor "originated and then signed into law the 38-percent income tax increase."

Persons interested in signing petitions or volunteering for the recall campaign may enclose their name, ad-



Gov. James J. Blanchard recall target

dress and phone number in a self-addressed, stamped envelope and mail it to John Lauve, 983 Hampton, Grosse Pointe Woods, 48236.

DOWN'S ARGUED that Lauve's petition was misleading because it blames the governor for the income tax increase. In addition, Downs said, the recall document suggests that the tax increase was frivolous and unnecessary.

"It doesn't say anything about the legislature's role," Downs said. "It confuses voters because it gives the im-

pression that if he hadn't done this, everything would be all right.

"It's a case of the messenger giving the bad news to the king and getting his head chopped off," Downs said.

LAUVE CALLED Downs' arguments "immaterial." "Those are all side issues," he said. "I could think of 50 reasons myself why he signed the tax increase." "The point is that this petition is clear, specific and simple," Lauve added. "It's a question of whether the people pay the bills sent down by the governor or live within the means of increased taxes."

All the recall supporters agreed. Susan Katz of Union Lake said the petition was so clearly worded that her eighth-grade son understood it.

When Downs suggested the Katz boy may not be attending school if taxes weren't increased, many of the recall supporters booed.

SOME SUPPORTERS — who had taken a half-day off work to attend the hearing — were angry that the governor requested a delay.

"I was able to put important issues aside to come here," said Linda Smith of Marine City. "I'm sorry the governor couldn't make it, but we did."

Added her husband, Richard Smith: "The voters can make a decision about this recall on their own. We don't need to wait for a bureaucratic play from the governor to delay the process."

pet of the week



DAVID FRANK/staff photographer

Muffin is as beautiful in person as she is in a picture. The pure-bred sheltie is 16 months old, spayed and housebroken. An affectionate young lady who gets along well with children, she will need a fenced yard. To find out how to adopt her, contact the Birmingham Humane Society, 654 Buell, Rochester, phone 652-8844.

Boy's death unsolved; \$1,000 reward offered

Oakland County Prosecutor L. Brooks Patterson is offering a \$1,000 reward for information leading to the arrest of a hit-and-run driver who struck and killed a 14-year-old Pontiac boy last summer.

Patterson, who set aside the \$1,000 from money he earned during speaking engagements, said he wants to play a role in helping to solve the crime.

"I want to bring this back to the forefront of public notice," Patterson said at a press conference last week. "This is a tragedy of monumental proportion as far as the family is concerned."

Patterson said he made the decision after reading a recent newspaper article about the family.

"THE MOTHER is still grieving because the crime remains unsolved," he said. "She has a shrine in her home with pictures of her son."

Elaine Berney, the boy's mother, choked back tears as she said, "I just

want them (officers) to catch the bandit who killed my son."

Pontiac Township police officers have searched for evidence since Tony Berney, who was riding his bicycle along the shoulder of northbound M-24 near I-75, was killed by a hit-and-run driver at 9:55 p.m. July 14, 1992.

Police announced last week that they had recovered the crown hood ornament which identified the car as a white Cadillac DeVille manufactured between 1976 and 1982.

Sgt. Jerry Knapp said they found the ornament at the scene of the accident last year but waited until recently to release the information because "we wanted to weed through all our leads."

Persons with information about the accident may call the Pontiac Township Police Department, 373-6200. Anonymous tips will be accepted.

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