

Levin fights government intrusion

By Kathy Parrish
staff writer

As a Detroit city councilman, Carl Levin was a champion of local rights and believed federal officials should bow to local concerns.

Now that he's a U.S. Senator, Levin says he tries hard to make sure he knows what the folks back home want.

"I believe local officials know what's best for the community, and the federal government doesn't," Levin said in a recent interview.

Levin said that when he was elected to the U.S. Senate in 1978 there was "too much federal intrusion, dominance, inflexibility and waste."

"I WENT to Washington determined to reverse that."

In the 4 1/2 years he has been a senator, he has attempted to diminish federal intrusion in local affairs, he said.

Levin was in the area for a tour which included a speech to Troy Chamber of Commerce and visits to two Strategic Air Command bases.

In an interview with the Observer he spoke about his stands on issues ranging from cable TV, super sewer and mass transit to MX missiles, military preparedness and draft registration but hurried past discussion of his re-election possibilities.

Levin, 46, was an attorney and long-time Detroit councilman before defeating Republican Robert Griffin in 1978. His six-year Senate term ends next December.

HE IS ALMOST certain to be a candidate for re-election in next year's election but declines to make an announcement at this point.

Levin said one of his top goals has been to pass a legislative veto bill which would empower Congress to overrule regulations made by any federal bureaucracy.

The bill passed the Senate in different forms, but still hasn't made it through the House.

One of the things that convinced him of the need for such efforts, Levin said, was the way the federal department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) mismanaged a home acquisition program in Detroit.

"HUD ALMOST wiped out Detroit," he said.

Levin said he was not opposed to HUD programs per se, but thinks that there should be more control over what various federal departments do. "I believe government plays a critical role, but it's fourth branch — the bureaucracy — that has too much power."

"People get frustrated with regulations and don't know where to go for relief," said Levin. "They want to go to their elected officials, not to an agency in Chicago."

While the U.S. Supreme Court recently overruled one type of legislative veto, Levin said he is confident the proposed bipartisan Levin-Boren-Grassley bill is constitutional.

HIS BELIEF that the federal government has too much power led Levin to vote against the Cable Telecommunications Act of 1983, which the Senate passed 87-9 and sent to the House.

Levin said he thinks the bill will be defeated in the House because of concern over preserving local control over cable television.

Proposed by cable firms, the national legislation would take precedence over contracts between cable TV companies and the local communities. The Southeast Council of Governments called the bill an "unwarranted intrusion on municipal powers."

While admitting that heated competition has resulted in some "onerous agreements" between cities and cable firms, Levin does not believe Congress should alter them.

Levin calls the cable legislation "arrogant, presumptuous, unethical usurpation of power" by the federal government.

"I WAS A local official and still am a lawyer — and I can read a contract," he said, acknowledging that some cities "held up" the cable companies.

"But that's what private enterprise is all about. It's competition, and they don't have to agree to conditions they don't like."

While encouraging cable competition, Levin personally isn't interested in becoming a subscriber. The lawmaker watches little TV and would like it on even less in his house.

"My kid's a TV junkie, and I'd like to get her off it. More channels and better reception aren't what I have in mind for her," he cracked.



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Road bids to be taken on Oakland projects

Thirty-three projects for repair, upgrading and construction of Michigan roads and highways will be let out for bids Thursday, Sept. 8, in Lansing. The Michigan Department of Transportation will open bids at 10:30 a.m. in Lansing Civic Center.

In Oakland County, bids will be taken on:

• In Pontiac, resurfacing 1.8 miles on US-10 Business Route from north of Montclair south to Wide Track Drive and Cass Avenue from the intersection with US-10 BR, then southwest to where the existing asphalt surface ends. Completion is set for June.

• Traffic signal upgrading on one-half mile on Orchard Lake at 12 Mile, then south to the Oakland Community College entrance. Completion is expected in November.

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