

Murphy wins key county vote, eyes Capitol

By Tim Richard
staff writer

Oakland County commissioners handed County Executive Daniel T. Murphy's gubernatorial campaign an early present by upholding one of his key vetoes.

Murphy, executive for 11 years, Tuesday will open his campaign for the Republican nomination for governor. A kick-off party will run 5-8 p.m. in Roma's of Bloomfield, 2101 S. Telegraph.

He also will fly to Lansing Tuesday night and hold a series of news conferences around the state Wednesday — in the House press room and at airports in Lansing, Saginaw, Cadillac, Traverse City, Marquette and Grand Rapids.

Murphy is the last of three major candidates to announce a bid for the chance to unseat Democrat James J. Blanchard. Others are Wayne County Executive William Lucas and Livingston County Industrialist Richard Chrysler.

County Executive Daniel Murphy will open his campaign for governor Tuesday. Murphy won a key vote Thursday as the county board refused to take control of county sewer operations away from his office.



THE COUNTY board Thursday refused to reconsider an attempt to override Murphy's veto of an ordinance that would have removed sewer operations from the executive's Public Works Department and consolidated

them under Drain Commissioner George Kuhn. The ordinance would have given Kuhn the expanded title of "public works commissioner." The office would have been elective.

Without public debate, the board voted 16-8 against reconsidering an attempt to override the veto.

"As a practical matter, the votes weren't there," said Commissioner Robert Page, R-Birmingham.

Usually a Murphy loyalist, Page had jumped ship last year to lead the effort to consolidate the two operations under Kuhn. The ordinance was passed in December with support from 18 of the 27 commissioners.

Murphy promptly vetoed it, arguing that Oakland voters clearly intended in 1974 to pursue the consolidation of administrative functions under the executive.

BUT THE back room persuasion of Murphy and his political deputy, Patrick Nowak, resulted in a reversal of the vote.

The attempt to override fell short in January, and the reconsideration attempt flopped last week.

Supporting the veto were 15 Republicans, including Page, and one Democrat, Hubert Price of Pontiac.

Seeking reconsideration were five Democrats and three Republicans — Ralph Nelson of Rochester, Richard Kuhn of Waterford and Susan Kuhn of Clawson.

"Everyone agrees," said Page, "that the posts should be consolidated — but which way?"

Murphy's attempts to seek state legislation allowing the drain commissioner to be brought under the executive have been frustrated for a decade by a Democratic-controlled Legislature.

MURPHY WON a 21-4 victory in a minor skirmish about a \$81,000 remodeling of the executive's building to make room for the expanded Economic Development Group.

Democratic Commissioner Betty Fortino of Waterford called it "frivolous spending" and cast a no vote. She was joined by three other Democrats, including Alexander Perloff of Southfield.

The issue has partisan overtones. Murphy calls the Economic Development Group a key to Oakland County's winning one-third of the new office investment in the state.

Democrats hit it at every budget opportunity, seeking to cut its staff and quarters.

The county board's action Thursday approved a contract award of \$52,000 to A.F. Bellisario of Pontiac and provides nearly \$18,000 for other project costs.

States with seat-belt laws see traffic death tolls drop

Traffic death tolls among those drivers and passengers covered by safety-belt use laws are continuing to decline, according to reports from states which had such laws in 1985.

Six states with longest experience with safety-belt use laws — Michigan, New York, New Jersey, Illinois, Texas and Nebraska — reported decreases in fatalities ranging from 10 to 28 percent.

"If everyone buckled up — even on short trips — we would save an additional 10,000 lives in 1986," said Elizabeth H. Dole, U.S. secretary of transportation.

TRAFFIC Safety Now, an organization dedicated to the passage of safety-belt use laws in all 50 states, reported that the total count on the number of lives saved in 1985 is not yet complete.

Nevertheless, they translated the early figures into a savings of nearly 525 lives in those states.

The University of Michigan Transportation Research Institute last week found 43 percent of Michigan motorists buckling up, a decline from the high of 58.4 percent in July, immediately after the law took effect.

But Michigan's 43 percent was still double the percentage which buckled up before the law was passed. The U-M researchers also found that women were more likely than men to buckle up, and that small car users were more likely to buckle up than occupants of mid-sized and large cars. Riders in pickup trucks were least likely to buckle up.

STATE POLICE in Michigan recently reported the first weekend without a traffic fatality in 10 years — or more than 500 weekends.

Highway safety officials point out that, in some cases, 1985 statistics are provisional and may be adjusted slightly upward or downward. Nevertheless, they say fatality counts have been stabilizing at a consistently lower level in states with safety-belt use laws in effect.

New York, first in the nation to enact a safety-belt use law, recorded the 17 percent fewer fatalities for a period of six months or more — best record in the nation. New York's toll was 795 vehicle occupants in the period of January-September 1985, compared with the average of 960 traffic fatalities in the same nine months for the previous five years.

New Jersey, which has had a safety-belt use law since last March 1, showed 61 fewer drivers and

front-seat passengers have died since the effective date of the law through December compared to the same period for the previous five years.

Illinois reported a 15-percent reduction in fatalities among motor vehicle occupants for the six-month period in which that state's law has been in effect (July 1 through December 31, 1985).

MICHIGAN, WHOSE safety-belt use law also went into effect on July 1, showed 52 fewer vehicle occupants have died in the six months that the law has been in effect compared with the previous year. Michigan Gov. James Blanchard said: "This measure (Michigan's safety-belt use law) stands as one of the most important traffic-safety measures ever adopted in this state. It promises immediate savings in lives, limbs and dollars."

Texas reported that front-seat occupant fatalities declined 26 percent in September and October, the first two months that the state's law was in effect.

"I believe legislation that will save 30,000 Texans a year from fatality and injury is legislation worth signing," said Mark White, governor of Texas. "Seat belts do, in fact, save lives."

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