

# Blanchard campaign issue: 'more of same'

By Tim Richard  
staff writer

Gov. James Blanchard will play up his suburban origins, raising few new issues as he seeks a second four-year term in Lansing.

"There were so many initiatives that it's going to take a lot of follow-through," Blanchard, 43, said last week in his first re-election news conference.

It was staged in his home town of Pleasant Ridge, just a few blocks from his boyhood school in Ferndale where he announced his candidacy April 27.

"It is a strength — particularly as a Democrat — to have a suburban base," said Blanchard, "because that's the growing base of our country. Democrats have to represent the suburbs to represent America."

"THE STATE and voters deserve more than promises about the future," he said, warning people not to look for a string of new proposals from his campaign headquarters at 109 W. Michigan in Lansing.

His theme will be the economic "comeback" — the Michigan Strategic Fund, roads and bridges construction, business recruitment and job training. "We've lived up to our program," he said.

"I'm a very practical person with a lifetime of experience in economics," said Blanchard, who earned a master of business administration degree before becoming a lawyer, assistant attorney general and U.S. Representative in the 1970s.

"We can do more. We've got to keep it going."

He plugged his House-passed plan to expand homestead property tax rebates at the cost of closing certain "loopholes." (Republican senators, however, say Blanchard's "loopholes" are tax increases for banks and insurers. The GOP is advancing a 1987 plan to lower property taxes by half, substituting a voter-approved increase in the sales tax.)

THE GOVERNOR filed a series of questions on suburban issues, including:



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• Reorganization of the 15-member Southeastern Michigan Transportation Authority: "They need a smaller group that's accountable. They have no local basis of support (for operating money). SEMTA should be more than a conduit for (federal and state) money."

Blanchard said either a Big Four SEMTA board (mayor of Detroit, county executives of Wayne and Oakland, and the Macomb board chairman) or a Big Five (the four mentioned plus the state transportation chief) would be "acceptable."

• The expose of the business and private life of Republican front-runner Richard Chrysler: "No com-

ment" because "I do not have credibility with Republican primary voters."

"It will be a hard-fought, closely-decided race. I will behave as a governor, not a candidate, until fall. Politically, the best thing for me is to stay on the job."

• Republican legislative charges that the record 23,500 incorporations

of 1985 aren't a sign of business strength, but are really defensive legal steps by taverns and restaurants to limit their liability against lawsuits: "Hogwash, Dun & Bradstreet (credit rating firm) collects the data. Michigan set a record for new business startups, and this year's record in the first quarter is even higher."

• The GOP charge that unemployment is down because people are moving out of the state: "Michigan is gaining population now. We did lose population in the early '80s and late '70s." Western states are now "experiencing serious downturns (while) Michigan is helping lead the national recovery."

"The trend is clear. We shouldn't minimize the comeback or think it's time to relax."

• ON DETROIT issues, Blanchard answered:

Speaking at last weekend's Mackinac Island conference of the Greater Detroit Chamber of Commerce, Blanchard said these reforms should make costs more reasonable and policies more accessible.

"They are not the full answer to the problem," he said, "but we think we have come up with some very

good legislative responses."

The governor applauded the Michigan Supreme Court for upholding recent workers' compensation reforms, which he said should go a long way toward reducing costs as well as creating a more accountable system.

On the lack of a glowing endorsement from Mayor Coleman Young: "There are days when he's frustrated." Relations are good, however, and the two had lunch to discuss problems last week, he said.

• Detroit's desire for casino gambling: "I remain to be convinced. I have an open mind. I've never seen it as a panacea. I've never been a fan or supporter of it."

On the charge that his administration is dominated by an "Oakland County Mafia": "I am proud I represented Oakland and Macomb counties in Congress (1977-82). We have people from all over the state and nation on my staff," he said, citing Treasurer Robert Bowman from Wall Street, former Commerce Director Ralph Gerson from Washington, D.C., Transportation Director James Pitz from Illinois and Public Health Director Gloria Smith from Oklahoma.

## Dramshop reform bill OK — Blanchard

Gov. James J. Blanchard said he expects to sign into law the beginning of reforms dealing with dramshop insurance and medical malpractice.

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