

'A masterful campaign'

Blanchard makes history; voters split ticket

By Tim Richard
staff writer

Michigan voters confirmed their reputation as ticket-splitters Tuesday.

They gave Gov. James J. Blanchard and the state Democratic ticket a landslide 1986 victory, then turned around and kept the state Senate in Republican hands for four more years.

Blanchard won a second term with about 69 percent of the vote, denying Republican challenger William Lucas the chance to become the nation's first black elected governor.

"He said he wanted to make history, and he did — but not the way he wanted," Blanchard said at his election-night party in a Westin Hotel ballroom.

The state Elections Division at midday Wednesday had no vote to this — not even partial results. All state tallies are based on network exit polls.

"A MASTERFUL campaign, without mistakes," said Joe Forbes, former House floor leader from Oak Park who now handles job training programs for the governor.

"We'd check each day, and if nothing had happened, we got off that day. Jim had a track record. Voters figured if it ain't broke, don't fix it."

said Forbes, a longtime Blanchard associate.

Oakland County voters favored local boy Blanchard 175,945 to 100,094 for Lucas. Secretary of State Richard Austin and Attorney General Frank J. Kelley, two Democratic veterans, led their Republican opponents by similar margins.

On education posts, the clearest indicator of partisanship, Oakland voters split almost evenly between Democrats and Republicans.

ALTHOUGH BOTH parties had targeted Senate seats, the upper chamber will remain 20-18 Republican. It has been that way since voters recalled two Democratic senators in 1983 in a tax revolt and replaced them with Republicans.

"Voters want a balance in state government," said James Barrett, president of the Michigan State Chamber of Commerce.

"If you look at the Senate elec-

tions, we had challenges to many Senate Republican incumbents that focused on the tax issue. Obviously, voters thought Republican senators had worked well. This will have a definite effect on the tax increase approach of the governor," said Barrett.

The chamber made no endorsement in the gubernatorial race — a victory in itself for Democrat Blanchard — but blistered the governor's "tax fairness" package, which called for increases in taxes on insurance premiums, bank deposits and other business matters.

FOR REPUBLICANS, who recruited Lucas into their ranks only 18 months ago, the question was, what went wrong? How could Lucas, who was riding so high until the Aug. 4 primary, take a worse drubbing than Democrat Zolton Ferency suffered in 1986 and perhaps the worst in six decades?

Weldon Yeager, Birmingham in-

urance man and the GOP secretary of state candidate, said, "I felt he should have concentrated on two big issues — crime and the economy — rather than all the peripheral issues. Blanchard kept pounding away at crime and the economy," Yeager said in the Pontchartrain Hotel just minutes before Lucas delivered his concession speech.

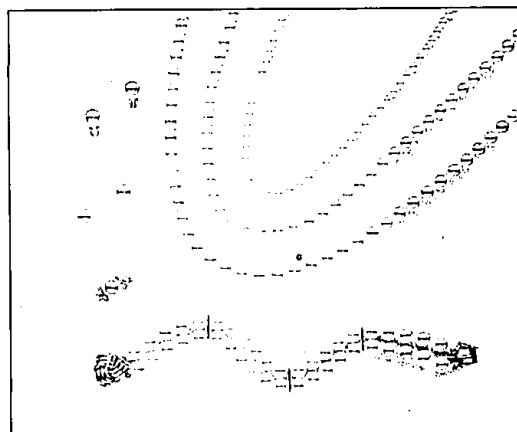
"His organization never really jelled," added Michael Legg, Northville attorney and 2nd Congressional District leader.

Betty Howe, former Oakland County Democratic chairman and now Blanchard's Labor Department director, said Lucas' campaign began to collapse when "he couldn't even put together his ticket" — a reference to the flap over Lucas' troubles picking an attorney general candidate.



Gov. James Blanchard, with wife Paula, made election history with his second-term victory margin.

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