

GOP rules to cause 'quagmire,' lawsuit

By Tim Richard
staff writer

It may look like old times Jan. 14 as Republican precinct delegates convene in Oakland County. But looks will be deceiving.

"This throws us in a real quagmire," said Oakland GOP Chairman Larry Dickerson after the Republican State Committee Saturday amended its delegate rules to favor the conservative coalition.

The new rules give greater apportionment power to supporters of presidential aspirants Jack Kemp and Pat Robertson, taking it away from backers of Vice President George Bush.

"Gerrymandering. The (old) rules were being grossly manipulated," charged Paul Welday, a Kemp campaign staffer, Farmington Hills resident and RSC member from the 18th Congressional District. Welday supported the change.

"Conservatives should put local control before central control," countered Andy Anuzis, chairman of the 17th Congressional District (Southfield, Redford and northwest Detroit). Anuzis was one of three Kemp backers who broke ranks to support the Bush position.

THE RSC, in two major decisions favoring the Kemp-Robertson coalition:

• Voted 52-48 to adopt new apportionment rules that allow the RSC rather than local committees to handle apportionment. The Bush camp threatened a lawsuit.

• Voted to appeal a pro-Bush decision by Judge George Boucher in

The Bush camp is 'a closed shop with the elite few making decisions.' The nominating procedure 'just plain stinks. But it's the only one we've got.'

— Paul Welday
for rules change



Kent Circuit Court. Boucher ruled the RSC's Kemp-Robertson majority erred last September when it barred GOP nominees for legislative and county offices from being delegates to their local convention.

Veteran party officials and officeholders are considered to be pro-Bush. In contrast, many of the Robertson people are new to the party. "In my 12th District," said Robertson backer Harry Verser of Mount Clemens, "one-third of the committee are former Democrats."

The Bush group Monday went back to Kent Circuit Court to force the RSC to comply with state law, as the Bush group sees it. Judge Boucher set a hearing for Dec. 31.

OPERATIONALLY, here is how conventions will be run at 7:30 p.m. Jan. 14.

Unchanged will be arrangements for the 18th Congressional District (including greater Rochester, Birmingham-Bloomfield, most of Troy,

West Bloomfield and greater Farmington). It will meet as a unit in Lahser High, Bloomfield Hills. Presiding will be chairman Dallas Haun of West Bloomfield.

But the official call for the 6th, 7th and 17th districts has gone out, Dickerson said, and must be changed. Under the previous (Bush) rules, they would have been called to order in a county convention chaired by Dickerson in the County Commissioners Auditorium in Pontiac and then broken into caucuses.

Instead, the other will meet in district conventions at the same hour in places to be designated.

In many places across the state, "rump" conventions are possible.

Purpose of all conventions is to elect 1,895 delegates to the Jan. 29 state convention in Grand Rapids. The state convention will pick 77

delegates to the presidential nominating convention in August in New Orleans.

MICHIGAN'S DELEGATES will be the first in the country. That's why Bush, Kemp and Robertson have been criss-crossing the state.

"We wouldn't be here if we were 15th on the list to pick national delegates," said Senate Majority Leader John Engler, who held a proxy vote from the 10th Congressional District.

"We should not be tampering with these rules, particularly 32 days before the (local) conventions," Engler told the RSC.

He was joined in voting against the rules change by most of the party leadership — state chairman E. Spencer Abraham, GOP National Committee members Peter Secchia of Grand Rapids and Ronna Romney of Bloomfield Hills, and his own right-hand man, Sen. Dick Posthumus, a Kemp supporter who switched sides on the issue.

FORMER GOV. George Romney, using a proxy from a party vice chairman, delivered a colorful denunciation of the proceedings.

"Both sides are at fault," the 80-year-old one-time presidential contender roared, though he voted with the Bush people against the rules change.

"To change the rules now is morally indefensible and contrary to state law," he said, predicting court battles and rump conventions if the new rules passed.

'Conservatives should put local control before central control.' The rules change takes power from county committees and gives it the Republican State Committee.

— Andy Anuzis
against rules change



Blistering the voting record of incumbent Democratic Sen. Donald Riegle, who is seeking a third term in 1988, Romney said, "If this amendment is approved, you can kiss goodbye to Republican victories in Michigan in 1988."

THE CONSERVATIVE coalition kept silent and afterwards opined that Romney was exaggerating. Welday of Farmington Hills denounced the Bush camp as "a closed shop with the elite few making decisions."

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