# **Prosecutor** issue: high staff turnover

By Tim Richard stalf writer

The turnover rate in the Oakland County prosecutor's office is becom-ing a central issue among four rivals for the Republican nomination in the

ing a central issue among rour rivarior for the Republican nomination in the Aug. 2 primary.

Retiring Prosecutor L. Brooks Patterson has endorsed his 16-year chief depuly, Richard Thompson. But challengers say Thompson's treatment of staff attorneys is harming the office.

Thompson scolfs that Jeffrey Leib, John McDonald and Richard Fessler have been "defense attorneys for 15 years" and are undergoing a "miraculous conversion" as they seek to fill Patterson's shoes. The staff morale issue — widely talked about in county building corridors — burst into the open Monday night at a forum sponsored by the Troy Republican Club.

"THERE IS A revolving door in

"THERE IS A revolving door in the prosecutor's office," said Leib, a Southfield lawyer in private prac-tice.

tice.
"Last fall, as I recollect, there "Last fail, as I recollect, there were 17 positions open (for assistant prosecutors, out of a staff of about 70).
"There is a reason — the attitude going around the prosecutor's office, probably led by Mr. Thompson. "Until that attitude is changed — until there is more sensitivity to the assistant prosecutors more respect."

"I KNOW SOMETHING about that," and McDonald, a county commissioner from Farmington and chairman for 10 years of the county commissioner from Farmington and chairman for 10 years of the county board's personnel committee.

"Being a former assistant prosecutors used to stay when I first Joined the office." McDonald said he and the board should be given credit for improving 'pay and benefits.

"One of the reasons I left in 1973 was that I had three children who were starting school, and I was making about \$13,000 a year, and a patroman was making more. One of the first things I did (on the first things to the first things to the sail critics of the prosecutors."

In his closing remarks, McDonald added, "A prosecutor has to have the respect of the lawyers he manages. But you know what? They're still leaving." he said, citting a 16 percent rate in 1984.

"Why are they leaving? We're giving them the money."

cent rate in 1984.
"Why are they leaving? We're giving them the money."
Saying he had the endorsements of 40 former assistant prosecutors — "those people who know what the job is about" — McDonald said, "they're

for me. Not for Dick, For me."

"DO EXIT interviews to find out why they're leaving," suggested Fes-sler, a 14-year veteran of the state House and Senate. "Are they leaving because of sal-ary? of lack of benefits? of lack of a

ary? of lack of benefits? of lack of a proper retirement system?

"You go to the board of commissioners and say, 'Look, these things have to be done if you're going to build a professional staff."

"You need someone who 1) recognizes the problem; a) identifies the problem and 3) goes to the board of commissioners if the problem is monetary," Fessler said.

"SALARIES WERE low," said Thompson. "They traditionally used the prosecutor's office as a place to get experience and then go on. "When Jeff Leib was in the office

"When Jeff Leib was in the office (to 1970), the average stay was 18 months. Today it is 5½ years, and that is because we have established morale and a sense of professional-ism.

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"It's a credit to the board of com-missioners, too, because they did lis-ten to my pleas to have a retirement system for prosecutors so they could have a lifelong career."

Thompson matched his 16 years as chief assistant to Leib's 18 months, Fessier's six months and McDonald's three years, poking at McDonald for seeking "a deal" for a client last year.

FESSLER, IN the middle of a four-year Senate term, was a surprise, last-minute entry into the race. He is going through a well-publicized divorce and earlier this year was convicted of impaired driving. He was asked if he's a serious candidate for presenting or [II] it's a play?

was convicted of impaired driving. He was saked if he's a serious candidate for prosecutor or if it's "a ploy" to make his personal life an old issue by 1990.

Fessier said he couldn't announce earlier because "I was working on some truck safety legislation with AAA Michigan and some news media, and I didn't want them to feel misused.

"I'm in it for the win," Fessier said, citting his strength in his poils.

Accused of using "every trick in the book" in fighting his drunk-driving arrest, Fessier replied, "I believe in the Constitution . . . My skeletons are on parade. I made mistakes. I apologize for my mistakes," he said, adding he was fighting the Bloomfield Township attorney and not the prosecutor.

Thompson: "The chief law enforcement officer should set an example and be beyond reporach."

Leib: "I will campaign on my own merits."

McDonald: "He's a serious candidate."

## Casino petitions: ploy or leadership?

All four Republican candidates for Oakland County prosecutor oppose casino gambling, but three don't see making a point of it in the Aug. 2

making a point of the primary.
Richard Thompson, chief deputy prosecutor, saw "the handwriting on the wall," predicted Detroit Mayor Coleman Young's commission would favor gambling, and two weeks ago started a petition campaign opposituation.

started a petition campaign oppos-ing it.

The petitions carry Thompson's name prominently, and the drive is being conducted out of his campaign office. Speaking to Troy Republicans Monday, he calls it a sign of leader-

"IT GETS YOU media attention," said Richard Fessler, one of Thompson's rivals, of the news conforence and petition drive. A state senator, Fessler said bills to legalize casino gambling "didn't move out of my committee."
"It gives him (Thompson) a nice mailing list . . . a great political ploy," said attorney Jeffrey Leib of West Bloomfield. "I oppose casino gambling. Every law enforcement officer opposes it."
"I'm opposed," said John McDonald, county commissioner from Farmington. "I wish Mr. Thompson would print my name on the bottom of his petition.

THOMPSON'S petition asks Gov.
James Blanchard and the state Legislature to "reject any attempt to legalize casino gambling in Michigan."
Detition forms are unuliable to be Petition forms are available at his campaign headquarters, 258-0404.

"A political action? No question," said Thompson. "We've sat back politicly. Law enforcement people have sat back politicly. The Greater Detroity chamber of commerce, in a politicy worded statement, said it was opposed."

To the chief assistant prosecutor, casino gambling is linked with organized crime — drugs, prostitution, bribing of police, corruption of politicians, fights for control.

Detroit voters face an Aug. 2 ballot question on an ordinance that would probablit casino gambling even if state law allowed it.

Thompson called gambling are gional issue, adding, "we will not tolerate Oakland Courty becoming a bed-com community for the mob."

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(Commerce Township), the state of Township, the state of the State Affairs-Transportation Committee, vice chair of Judiciary Committee practicing attorney in Bioomificial Hills.
EDUCATION: Oakland Community College, Oakland University, BA; University of Detroit Law School, JD.

JD.

CAREER: assistant prosecutor,
Waterford Township attorney, deputy county treasurer, state representative 1975-82.



#### Jeffrey Leib

LIFE: 46, resident of West Bloom-

LIPE: 48, resident of West Bloom-iseld Township, birth sign Scorpio. OCCUPATION: attorney in gener-al practice in Southfield, secretary of Oakland County Bar Association. EDUCATION: Helisgan State Uni-versity, BA; University of Detroit Law School, 4D. CAREER: assistant prosecutor, 1968-70; Isgal adviser to probate judges, 1970-1; Orchard Lake city prosecutor, 1974-6; probate court re-feree and circuit court mediator (per-fodically); township planning com-mission, 12 years; township trustee, flive years.



#### John McDonald

LIFE: 48, Farmington Hills; birth

LIFE: 48, Farmington Hills; birth sign Virgo.
EDUCATION: University of Detroit, BS; Wayne State University, MS; Detroit College of Law, JD, OCCUPATION: Oakland County commissioner since 1875, chair of transportation committee 1987-8; practicing attorney in Farmington Hills.
CAREER: teacher in Detroit, 1861-5; General Tire sales, 1964-70; assistant prosecutor, 1970-73.



#### Richard Thompson

LIFE: 51, Clarkston resident; birth

LIFE 51, CJARKSION resident: Dirth sign Taurus.
OCCUPATION: chief assistant prosecutor, 16 years, board of Oakland Narcotics Enforcement Team, project director of anti-drug unit.
EDUCATION: University of Michigan, BA; Wayne State University Law School, LLB.
CAREER: attorney in private practice, 1965-73.





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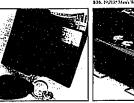


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