

Miller 'driven' in race for secretary of state

By Brian Lysaght
staff writer

Judy Miller admits she faces long odds to defeat Michigan's ever-popular Secretary of State, Richard Austin, but the Republican from Bloomfield Township says she is determined to try anyway.

Miller points to her car's odometer as proof of her efforts so far to oust Democrat Austin. She's driven 5,000 miles in less than two months.

Along the way, the former Birmingham city commissioner and soon-to-be former state representative has learned the difficulty of campaigning for statewide office. Her state House district, the 65th,

which includes Birmingham and Bloomfield Township, is tiny by comparison.

Miller's itinerary last week includes Grand Rapids, Jackson, Flushing and Alma, and she will be in Lansing on Election Day, Tuesday. There she will join the rest of the state Republican ticket: John Engler, the gubernatorial candidate who chose Miller; Engler's lieutenant governor selection, Connie Binfield; and his attorney general selection, Cliff Taylor.

"IT'S BEEN a very broadening experience for me," Miller said in an interview last week. If she doesn't win, she will return to her Bloomfield Township condominium, but she isn't revealing any plans beyond that. Miller represented the 65th District for six years.

Miller, 54, is given little chance of winning. Austin, 77, has been re-elected five times. The man whom drivers — and voters — see smiling from photographs in secretary of state offices was elected in 1970.

He trounced his last Republican



Judy Miller, GOP hopeful opponent, Weldon Yeager, a former Bloomfield Township trustee, in 1986. Austin swept 82 of 83 Michigan counties and collected 1.6 million votes.

Miller is hoping for a better showing, though she seems realistic about her chances.

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— State Rep. Judy Miller

"MONEY? THERE'S not a lot of money," she said. Her campaign is centered on public appearances and a press packet sent to local newspapers and radio stations around the state, she said. She is concentrating on predominantly Republican areas of Michigan.

Miller said she would be a more active secretary of state than Austin, who rarely visited the legislature. "I think he's resting on the laurels of what he did when he first came in

to office," she said.

The Department of State could operate more efficiently and offices could be made "more user friendly," she said.

AMONG HER proposals:

- Increase the effectiveness of branch offices by better computer use, better staffing and more convenient hours and locations.

- Abolish the officeholder expense funds that legislators can set up, which she said allow for too many misuses — or at least to more strictly enforce rule breakings.

- Simplify the state's campaign finance law.

- Make custom license plates representing Michigan public colleges and universities to raise money for education and roads.

- Allow drivers to buy license plates every two years rather than annually to help cut lines.

She said Gov. James Blanchard has failed to provide leadership in Michigan, and that Engler would. Miller, who is pro-choice, said she found it easy to look beyond the

abortion issue in supporting Engler, who is pro-choice. She said that Engler has a long record of appointing women to positions of power.

THIS IS Miller's second campaign this year. She passed up re-election to the House to challenge Rep. David Honigman for the state Senate seat vacated by Richard Pessler.

Honigman defeated Miller in the August GOP primary after a bitter and heated race. Miller said she and Honigman have yet to resolve differences from the primary.

"David and I have not really talked since the election," she said.

Miller said she is prepared to leave political office if Austin wins. She said her husband, Steven, continues to teach chemistry at Oakland University, and the couple would remain in their Bloomfield Township condominium.

She said she did not know her exact plans if not elected, but would not rule out another run for political office.

"I've always gone into something with the idea that it's the right thing to do for now," Miller said.

New concepts for special ed

Parents of special education students are invited to attend a conference on inclusive education 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Thursday, Nov. 8.

"Changing Concepts in Special Education: Learning Together Today, Inclusive Communities Tomorrow" is being held at Pontiac Silverdome's Main Event restaurant. Inclusive refers to efforts to get children with special needs like physical or mental disabilities to attend regular schools rather than special schools.

"Today, parents (of special education children) are saying 'Why does my child have to go on a little yellow bus to a segregated school?'" said Judy Augsburg, who is publicizing the program and whose daughter is a special education student in Birmingham Public Schools.

The conference will include parents and educators with speakers from Wayne State University and the Washtenaw Association for Retarded Citizens.

Admission is \$10, including lunch. The program is sponsored by the United Cerebral Palsy of Detroit, Macomb Schools and the Oakland County Association for Retarded Citizens.

For more information, call 557-5070. Another conference is scheduled for Nov. 29, Augsburg said.

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