

# Tucker, Pernick win County Democrats opt for experience

By Pat Murphy  
staff writer

Preparing for the first and possibly most important challenges of 1991, Oakland Democrats have turned to two of their most experienced leaders.

In separate caucuses last week, Oakland Democrats elected Birmingham attorney Donald F. Tucker and Southfield businessman Lawrence R. Pernick to positions of leadership.

Tucker, 44, who lives in Birmingham and practices law from his office in Southfield, was elected chairman of the Democratic Party of Oakland County.

HE WAS ELECTED Dec. 4 by the party's executive committee. Pernick, a county commissioner from Southfield, was re-elected chairman of the Democratic caucus of the Oakland County Board of Commissioners at the party caucus Dec. 5.

Tucker and Pernick have been politically active for many years. Both acknowledge that reappointment will likely be the first and most important challenges facing the Democrats next year.

Reappointment, of course, is mandated every decade after certification of the census. Throughout the country, boundaries for federal, state and local elections will be redrawn, with an accompanying shake-up of the political structure.

ON A STATEWIDE basis, for example, Michigan will lose two of its

30 members in the U.S. House of Representatives. There is much speculation about which two representatives will be reapportioned out of office, including the possibility of parts of the 6th and 18th districts being combined.

Both districts include portions of Oakland County and if combined, could see incumbent Democrat Bob Carr pitted against incumbent Republican William Broomfield.

As county chairman, Tucker will be the only Democrat on the five-member Reapportionment Commission that will redraw boundaries for the Board of Commissioners races in 1992.

Other commission members are the county chairman of the Republican Party, currently James M. Alexander, a Birmingham lawyer, and the county prosecutor, treasurer and clerk. All are Republicans, Richard Thompson, Hugh Dobany and Lynn D. Allen, respectively.

Tucker has been Democratic chairman of the 18th Congressional district for 10 years. His successor in the 18th District has not been elected. Vice chairman is Sandy Teague of Lake Orion.

OTHER PARTY officers elected by county Democrats include William G. Wolfgram of Franklin as treasurer.

Pernick has been a county commissioner since 1989 and has been Democratic caucus chairman on several different occasions.

Pernick said reappointment will be an important issue and suggests that gerrymandering by Re-

publicans is one reason Democrats are outnumbered on the county board 19 to 6.

"We (Democrats) got more than 43 percent of the vote cast for county commissioners last month," he said. "Yet we occupy less than one-third of the seats on the county board."

Other officers elected by the Democratic caucus of the county board are: commissioner James Ferres, Pontiac, vice chairman; commissioner Hubert Price Jr., minority vice chairman of the finance committee; commissioner Dennis Aaron, Oak Park, minority vice chairman of the general government committee; commissioner Rudy Serra, Royal Oak, minority vice chairman of the personnel committee; commissioner Lillian Oaks, Southfield, minority vice chairman of the planning and building committee; and commissioner Ruel McPherson, Hazel Park, minority vice chairman of the public service committee.

THE CAUCUS also nominated Louis L. Miller, who is resigning as Democratic County Chairman, to a six-year term on the Oakland County Road Commission.

Miller of Farmington Hills is a financial resource manager with Financial Data Systems Inc.

He will run against incumbent road commissioner Richard V. Vogt who was renominated by Republicans last week.

With Democrats outnumbered 19 to 8, Miller will be a decided underdog when commissioners vote on the appointment this month.

# Cost-cutting adoption bills wait 'til next year

By Tim Richard  
staff writer

Three bills to cut the cost of adopting children died without debate in a state Senate committee recently.

"I haven't talked to anyone about them," said Sen. Dick Posthumus, R-Well, chairman of the commerce committee, which handles health insurance legislation.

Supporters criticized his lack of action on the bills, which were sent to his panel in April.

An adopted child isn't covered under the family's health insurance until one year after placement in the home, when the adoption is finalized. House Bills 5443-5 would have required insurers to treat adopted children like newborns.

"It should be one of the major initiatives of the Senate next year," said Posthumus. "For those of us who are pro-life, it would make adoption a more viable alternative. Generally, the concept is OK."

BUT POSTHUMUS is taking heat because the bills languished in his committee for eight months after winning House approval March 28.

"He's responsible for what happens in his committee. I'm very disappointed," said the sponsor, Rep. Maxine Berman, D-Southfield. "We'll bring them back next year."

In Howell, Heather Divian said she was "terribly disappointed at the system. I wrote to him and got a form letter of reply."

Divian and her husband Jeffrey, a vice president Capricorn Capital in Farmington Hills, have adopted a 4-year-old Korean-born boy. They are awaiting a second placement.

"We've been following the bills," said Divian, who has joined a dozen others in a support group in Brighton. She had filed an angry letter to Posthumus after learning the Senate would hold no more committee meetings this year.

"I'm terribly disappointed," said Don Marengere, president and founder of Adoption Option, based in Huntington Woods. "We don't discriminate on the basis of age, sex, color or religion. This is just discrimination against children who are adopted."

"We plan on coming back at 'em again," said Marengere, a Bloomfield Township resident.

The Senate's failure to act "just makes it harder to adopt. It's another roadblock to adoption."

Marengere said he received a letter from Posthumus' office expressing concern at "potential abuses of insurance." "What abuses? It's not an abuse to adopt," he said in reply.

POSTHUMUS and his panel have handled the highly controversial auto insurance and accident benefit bills in the last two years.

He also led the Republican Senate campaign effort. A confidant of Gov.-elect John Engler, Posthumus will succeed him as Senate majority

leader in 1991.

Doug Cruce, R-Troy, will chair the Commerce Committee next year. Some 5,300 families adopted children in 1988, according to Berman's staff.

Children who previously were wards of the probate court were eligible for coverage under Medicaid, the health care program for low-income people. But in some areas of the state, Medicaid-participating health-care providers are hard to find.

THREE BILLS are required to make the legal changes — one for health maintenance organizations (HMOs), a second for the Blues and a third for commercial health insurers.

"Blue Cross was not opposed. HMOs were opposed. It was the private insurers," said Berman.

Private insurers said the proposal wouldn't have permitted them to charge higher rates for adopted children with pre-existing health conditions. But the law requires them to cover newborns with the same conditions.

Berman scoffed at the objection. "A child is a child," she said. "Their compromise would have cut out a tremendous percentage of hard-to-place children."



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