

Political reform focuses on PACs, big bucks

By Tim Richard
staff writer

Big-money campaigns clearly are tainting politics and frustrating voters, said a panel of Republican legislators in Oakland County.

PACs (political action committees) have too big a role. Money has too big a role. You have to force the campaign to be run in the streets," said Terry Sever, a Farmington Hills resident who sought the Republican nomination for state senator in 1990.

"Special interests dominate the process," said Karen Holcomb-Merrill of Common Cause of Michigan, citing how legislators collect money

at the same time policy decisions are being made in Lansing.

BUT THE TASK force chair, Rep. Frank Fitzgerald, R-Grand Ledge, warned that fixing the system wasn't as simple as putting spending limits into state law because of the "rule of unintended consequences." If PAC spending is limited, Fitzgerald said, PAC leaders will get around the law by collecting "individual" donations on behalf of a favored candidate.

Joining Fitzgerald in the Friday hearing in the Farmington Hills library were Reps. Jan Dolan of Farmington Hills, Barbara Dobb of

West Bloomfield, William Bryant of Grosse Pointe and minority leader Paul Hillebrands of Holland.

The task force is a device minority Republicans use to influence the agenda that later will be set in Democratic-run House committees.

HERE ARE some of the ideas that speakers on the task force urged:

- Joe Knollenberg, 18th Congressional District GOP chair: "I would like to see power restored to the political parties." PACs can't be eliminated, as President George Bush advocated. But PACs have the bad effect of reinforcing incumbents who get 95 percent of PAC money. Parties should have either high spending limits or none. County executive campaigns have no spending limits. People see that judicial races are being 'bought'... from family mon-

ey or single sources... but I have no solution."

- Common Cause's Holcomb-Merrill: In 1978 PACs provided 40 percent of campaign money. In 1988, 70 percent. Prevent officeholders from "building up financial war chests" by requiring them to return or give to charity their unspent campaign funds. She advocated more fund disclosure, limiting the amount candidates can accept from PACs and public funding of campaigns.

Dobb, a freshman lawmaker, was skeptical about the value of disclosing contributors. "In this area, there was a lot of media attention on expenditures. But the people who spent big amounts got elected," she said.

- Sever: Limit PAC spending to 30 percent of any campaign.
- Jean Fox, Farmington Hills councilmember and an active Re-

publican: "Campaign expense reports need to be out before people go to the polls." Copies of candidates' spending and collecting reports should be filed in city and township halls as well as county seats and the state capital.

- Barbara Moorhouse, Bloomfield Hills, representing the state League of Women Voters: Limit size and type of contributions, provide public funding of campaigns or allow reduced postage rates for candidates.

- Mary Avery, Farmington Hills: Require unspent campaign funds to be given to the state or charity.

- Isaac Sheppard, Clawson: Limit campaign spending to a percentage of an officeholder's salary. "Can you imagine a business surviving if they spent 600 percent of its revenue on advertising?"

- William Laba, Farmington political activist: "We should have public financing."

- Dick Poshlman, president of the Farmington Republican Club and vice president of the local chamber: "Legislation should be viewed as a public service, not as the best job in town." Maximum pay should be \$30 a day. Pay should be based on 20 hours a week times 50 weeks at a rate of four times the minimum wage. Professionally run campaigns are "shallow but expensive media type" and should be replaced by less costly candidates' speeches and interviews.

- Bob Henrich, president of the Farmington Area Chamber of Commerce with experience in raising bank PAC funds: PACs should be prohibited from contributing to elections outside their area.

GOP, Dems unite to hasten benefits

By Tim Richard
staff writer

For once Republicans and Democrats, labor and management, the state House and Senate agree.

Jobless workers are waiting a month or more for unemployment checks, and Washington should cough up more money for staff to process their claims.

week for unemployment benefits. There is a de facto four or five week waiting period," said Sen. David Honigman, R-West Bloomfield.

Honigman, new chair of the Senate Labor Committee, is author of a resolution due for passage today in both chambers of the Michigan Legislature asking Congress to release more of the money it has been taxing employers to pay for more staff at the Michigan Employment Security Commission.

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