

Recall on

Taxpayers group taking out ads vs. county exec

By Pat Murphy
Staff writer

The recall aimed at County Executive Daniel T. Murphy is alive and well, according to a spokesman for the Oakland County Taxpayers Association.

It's quietly plotting strategy and gathering strength, according to Raymond Dugan, a Troy resident who is media contact for the association.

tion that claims 2,000 dues-paying members.

As a matter of fact, the Oakland Taxpayers Association is negotiating with cable television companies for a series of "20 or 30 commercials" to run, possibly next month, as its members start gathering signatures. Besides Murphy, the association plans to target any county commissioner who approved the county's selling bonds for its \$500 million solid waste program without first getting a vote of the people, according to Dugan.

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In January the association filed its recall petition against Murphy saying he had violated his public trust. The Oakland County Election Board ruled — and Murphy, through his attorney agreed — that wording on the petition is sufficiently clear to enable prospective signers to understand the issue.

THE RULING, in effect, gave the green light to the taxpayers association that claims Murphy and as many as a dozen county commissioners should be recalled.

The election board gave the association 100 days in which to collect about 83,000 signatures in order to put the recall on the ballot.

Dugan said those 100 days start as soon as he and his colleagues begin circulating the first petition. "We haven't done anything (since the election board ruling) for a number of reasons. But now we're getting ready."

One reason was the stroke Murphy

suffered Jan. 5 that left him disabled. Murphy still functions as executive, according to his two deputies and other office staff. But he doesn't plan to return to the office until next month.

Now that Murphy's situation is clarified, Dugan said his association is ready to begin its recall effort against the executive and commissioners who voted to fund the solid waste program without a vote.

Dugan and others claim not getting a vote is a violation of the 1978 Headlee Amendment to the Michigan Constitution that requires a vote of the people before taxes can be raised more than the cost of living.

A NUMBER OF Murphy associates and political allies have denounced the recall attempt, including Richard Headlee, the Farmington Hills businessman who is also chairman of taxpayers United for the Michigan Constitution.

James M. Alexander, chairman of the Oakland County Republican Party, is also critical of the recall effort. "Dan Murphy is the best executive in the state," he said. "He's effective and fiscally responsible."

Alexander also questions whether or not the association will be able to collect 83,000 signatures. "I for one will urge everybody I know not to sign that petition."

Coach, judge, mom want drug law eased

Continued from Page 5

cer who was an addict-lost his badge. My son lost his freedom."

CHARLES SKINNER, a Rochester Hills retiree who coached 34 years, pleaded for a change in the law on behalf of an unnamed young man convicted several years ago.

"We need severe penalties, but not sadistic ones. I consider this harsh justice or Khomeini justice," he said, referring to the Iranian religious leader who called for the death penalty for religious crimes.

U.S. District Judge Averil Cohn quoted appellate judges as comparing Michigan's penalties to "springing a tiger trap on a sick kitten."

Bellevue Young, a Trenton teenager, read a letter from his mother DeDonna, convicted 12 years ago at age 23. "I've watched convicted rapists and child molesters come and go," wrote the mother, who now has earned a bachelor's degree in criminal justice.

THOMPSON, who defended Michigan's law in arguments before the U.S. Supreme Court last fall, came back swinging.

"Proponents don't like it and want our judges don't like the lack of discretion," said Thompson, who

served as chief assistant to L. Brooks Patterson before winning the office in 1988.

"The victims haven't been able to speak out," said Thompson, referring to crack babies. The threshold for a life sentence, he said, is 650 grams, which is enough for 12,000 hits in powdered form and 5,000 rocks of crack.

Thompson had these replies to Murphy's supporters:

- To the charge that "only mules get caught," he said mules are intimately involved in the supply network. Major drug dealers don't have arrest records and deal with very few people.
- To the charge that "prisons are overcrowded," Thompson said less than 1 percent of Michigan's 21,000 convicts are there under the state's strict parole law.
- To the charge that kidnappers aren't being caught, he said, "The act never defines kidnappers. The purpose is to deter drug dealers. This act focuses on the supply network."
- To the charge that Michigan's law is stiffer than the federal law, Thompson said federal officials deferred to Oakland on prosecuting a major drug ring because of the tougher state law.

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