

# Residents here less likely to support Engler recall

By Pat Murphy  
staff writer

Pickings may be slim in Birmingham, Farmington Hills, Rochester Hills and other affluent areas, but the people upset with the budget cuts of Gov. John Engler say they will get enough signatures to put his recall on the ballot.

"We're going to cut it off (top gathering signatures) when we reach 2 million," said Maureen Taylor, a Detroit-area recall spokeswoman. "We knew that a lot of people didn't like Engler (and his budget cuts), but we didn't know how many dislike him."

Taylor made her assessment Tuesday as organizers of the statewide campaign to oust Engler prepared for a press conference Friday in Lansing. They plan to announce up-to-date number on signatures obtained since the recall started May 20.

At a similar press conference May 31, organizers said they had garnered more than 60,000 signatures, or about one-thenth of the



Gov. John Engler

641,141 needed to put Engler's recall on the ballot.

ORGANIZERS INSIST that figure is low, however, because it represents numbers from only 21 of the 17 Michigan counties in which the re-

call effort has coordinators. Not included, they said, are figures from Wayne, Oakland, Genesee and Ingham counties — some of the Michigan's most populous, with high concentrations of people hit by the governor's budget cuts.

No recall effort against a Michigan governor has ever been successful, partly because of the large number of signatures needed.

But Taylor — and her colleagues in Oakland and western Wayne County — are optimistic.

Their strategy includes sign-up tables at the Freedom Fest, one of the metro area's biggest summer events when Detroit and Windsor celebrate their common border with fireworks and other festivities. If this year's Freedom Fest, set for June 28, is like others, a million or more people will converge in the downtown Detroit area.

"This (the recall) was started by poor people for poor people," said Maggie Tyson, a recall worker who said she's been busy — except in her own neighborhood, Bloomfield Township.

"I've really been on the go," she said. "Saturday I took 200 petitions to Pontiac. People are constantly asking for more petitions."

Tyson said some of her neighbors

in the affluent Bloomfield area have signed the recall petitions. "They're the ones who know what's going on," she insisted. "They're affluent Republicans, but they realize what these budget cuts will do."

Since taking office in January, Engler has cut most general assistance programs as well as programs affecting health care, assistance to the arts and enforcement of environmental regulations.

Tyson, a volunteer in the Welfare Rights Organization, is critical of those cuts because they will affect mostly children and the disabled — people unable to find other means of support.

Michael D. Whitty, a Birmingham resident, said he sees "a genuine concern" the governor's budget cuts simply went too far. "Oakland County has a good number of the 'hidden poor,'" he said, "people who have lost their jobs" and either rely, or are close to relying, on public assistance.

On another level, many of the demonstrators against the arts cuts come from this area, so petitioners may find them a ready bank of signatures.

Supporters of Engler, however, insist the governor is basically doing what needs to be done to balance the

state's budget.

Among them is James M. Alexander, a Birmingham lawyer who is chairman of the Oakland County Republican Party. "I see no evidence of an organized campaign in Oakland," he said. "I can't imagine them being successful."

If by some chance they should get enough signatures, Alexander predicts that many people would come to Engler's defense. "Most people believe he's doing the right thing."

SOUTHFIELD ATTORNEY Donald Tucker, chairman of the Oakland County Democrats, said neither he nor other members of his party support the recall. "If voters don't like the policies of a public official, they

should throw him or her out at the next election," he said.

While he doesn't condone the recall against Engler, Tucker said it doesn't surprise him. "The chickens come home to roost," he said.

Regina McNulty, south Oakland chairman of the recall effort, said she too has been inundated with requests for recall petitions.

People supporting the recall are vocal, almost happy to sign the petitions, she said. "Those who don't are quite silent," said McNulty. "They don't want to talk about it."

McNulty said she is hosting a \$10-per-person fund raiser for the recall beginning at 7 p.m. Wednesday, June 19, at her home, 13770 Wales, in Oak Park. Tickets are \$10.

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