Candidates split on abortion

Left, center, right. Those were the positions, literally and philosophically, the three GOP candidates of the U.S. 11th Congressional District took on the abortion issue.

The candidates expressed their views on abortion and a variety of other topics at a meet the candidates night sponsored by the Birmingham and Bloomfield Republican Women's Club Wednesday at the Bloomfield Township Hall.

Candidates Alice Gilbert, David Honigman and Joseph Knollenberg faced the audience in that order, from left to right.

Gilbert stated clearly, "I'm the only pro-choice candidate." That comment drew the loudest and longest applause from the more than 100 persons present. "The federal government has no business telling women what to do with their bodies," she said.

She said dryly that the practice of showing women pictures of aborted fetuses before an abortion should logically lead to a law mandating that men be required to look at pictures of sperm cells before and after they die prior to having a vasectomy.

Knollenberg said simply, "I'm pro-life. I favor adoption over abortion."

■ 'The federal government has no business telling women what to do with their bodies.'

Alice Gilbert

■ 'I think abortion is morally wrong' . . . but 'I have conflicting feelings.'

David Honigman

■ 'I'm pro-life. I favor adoption over abortion.'

Joseph Knollenberg

Neither right, nor left

Honigman noted that it was appropriate that he was seated between the other candidates because his view is more middle-of-the-road.

"I think abortion is morally wrong," he said. But, he did not condemn it. "I have conflicting feelings." He said a fetus is not considered by many to be a full human, but "at one time Jews, and I'm a Jew, and blacks were not regarded as full humans."

"It's hard to figure out where to draw the line."

Honigman said he would discourage abortions but not ostracize women who had them.

On other issues, the candidates generally agreed that the national *deficit, the economy and crime were* key problems.

Knollenberg, an insurance agent who stressed his business background, cited the deficit as a critical concern.

"If you take care of that you can control other things. We've got to control spending," Knollenberg said. Households, he noted, have to live within their budgets.

Economy big issue

Gilbert, a former Oakland Circuit judge, said the economy is a major issue.

"We have to create capital to get it moving again," she said. She added the government should have a balanced budget and cut back on business regulations to stimulate the economy.

"I think you have to cut back on the number of government agencies and consider privatization of some services," she said.

Honigman, a state senator in the 17th District, spoke in a more general terms, saying the emphasis should focus on "how can we go about empowering people to have choices. Every dollar the government takes is a dollar less a mother has for day care or a senior citizen *can use for health care." He also* said the environment and crime need to be addressed.

Regarding crime, Gilbert said, "I think the crime enforcement agencies need the appropriate tools." Gilbert said as a judge she oversaw thousands of cases. "We must face the fact that certain people cannot be rehabilitated," she said.

Not more money

Knollenberg said police agencies need to work together, but the problem won't be solved "by pouring money on it. Enforce the laws on the books now," he said.

Honigman said, "One of the big things is to increase the probability that (criminals) will be caught. Have officers go door-to-door just like candidates do."

He also suggested increasing anti-gang units and supported harsher penalties for persons, such as drug dealers, who enlist youths in crimes.

On the Constitutional amendment proposal to require a balanced budget that's been kicking around in Congress, Honigman said, "I believe we should have a balanced budget amendment."

He also said the president should be allowed budget line-item veto power to eliminate specific appropriations proposed by Congress. He proposed cutting capital gains taxes, income taxes and spending.

Knollenberg also said the line-item veto is "essential." He said he supports a balanced budget. "And we haven't even begun to look at waste."

Gilbert said she would not favor a balanced budget amendment without a tax limit. She emphasized the importance of helping business by reducing government restrictions and product liability laws.

At the forum the candidates were all asked the same questions during the approximately 30-minute presentation.

The 11th District includes the Birmingham-Bloomfield area, West Bloomfield, Farmington, Farmington Hills, Southfield, Lathrup Village, Redford, most of Livonia and other areas.

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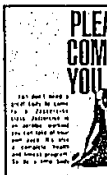

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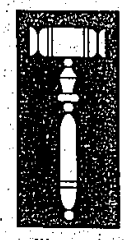

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