

# Despite law, those nasty campaign ads would continue

BY WAYNE PEAL  
STAFF WRITER

Even the author of a proposed campaign reform law admits Michigan politics is likely to remain mud-splattered in the wake of Tuesday's primaries.

State Sen. Phil Arthurs, R-Whitehall, seeks a new law that would bring criminal charges against candidates and campaign committees that knowingly issue false print or broadcast ads.

But Arthurs admits controversial ads that recently appeared locally would probably pass muster even if the law had been in effect.

Take Congressional challenger

David Honigman's television ad alleging fellow challenger Allee Gilbert, a former judge, left a courtroom full of people waiting while she attended an opening day baseball game at Tiger Stadium.

"At first blush, I don't think she could bring charges," Arthurs said. "Were there people in the courtroom that day? Were court cases scheduled and then dismissed? All that would come into play."

Then there was the bare knuckles battle for Wayne County Sheriff. Radio spots for challenger Kevin Kelley used a sexually-oriented impersonator to ridicule incumbent Robert Picano, who countered with

ads of his own in which a UAW official charged Kelley with making "David Duke-like" statements.

"Picano might be uncomfortable but there's probably nothing he could do," Arthurs said. "As for the David Duke allegations, it's not like saying his opponent himself had been a member of the Ku Klux Klan."

What, then is the point of the proposed reform?

"There's actually two points," Arthurs said.

First, campaign chairmen and treasurers would have to sign affidavits stating the print or broadcast ads they were presenting were true

to the best of their knowledge.

"It's almost impossible to bring action against a campaign committee," Arthurs said. "This at least puts a name to the claims."

Second, cash payment for campaign advertising would be banned. Arthurs said he believed this would make all ads traceable to

their authors.

Infractions would be considered misdemeanors.

"It is a fine line, but this at least would penalize those who step over it," Arthurs said.

It's one thing to identify mudslingers, another to bring them to court.

A third provision, requiring a 24-hour "cooling off period" before an ad was printed or broadcast has already been deleted.

"We found that would be illegal under Federal Communications Commission law," said Arthurs.

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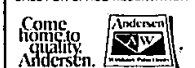
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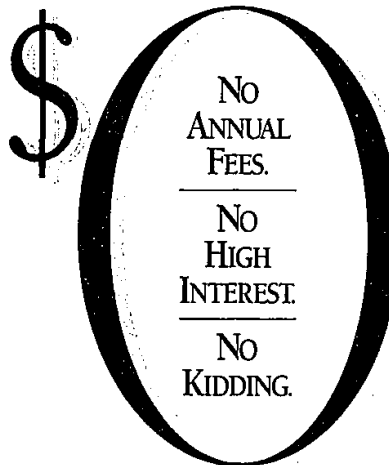
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If you like, cut out some more famous faces next week and test your friends.  
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