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14 years of state government service.

The candidates both praised Gov. John Engler for his efforts to cut taxes, but also parted company on some issues.

Brickner said limiting the single business tax and cutting extraneous taxes, but criticized Engler's proposal to change the changes in school funding that have hurt districts like Farmington.

Bullard agreed that Engler has done a good job on cutting taxes, saving the state's taxpayers \$1.3 billion this year. Like his opponent, the state representative does not like some of the governor's education policies, such as funding schools of choice.

Both agreed that the state and area's roads need serious attention. Bullard said he would look at administrative savings and impact fees on developers in the short term. He would schedule town meetings in the fall to determine the best way to pay for major improvements, but would lean toward a gas tax.

"The problem will not be finding a reasonable level of gas tax," Bullard said. "The people of

this area will support something reasonable. The problem will be making sure that a fair portion of that tax is returned (for roads) in this area."

Brickner said if tax money was dedicated strictly for roads, residents will be more receptive. He said that with the federal government on the verge of repealing a three-year-old 4.3 percent gas tax, the state could increase its gas tax by the same amount.

"It would not create an additional burden, just shift it to the state," he said. "If it is dedicated to the local counties and cities, then people would be in favor."

The candidates' sharpest area of disagreement was over abortion and right-to-life issues.

Bullard, who is endorsed by Michigan Right to Life, opposes abortions and has worked for laws banning tax-funded abortions. Brickner said abortion is a right-to-privacy issue. He said the issue of assisted suicide will not go away.

BY WILLIAM COUTANT
STAFF WRITER

They aren't exactly household names, but some of your friends and neighbors have a great deal of political influence.

They are precinct delegates who are some of their respective political party's most active members. And they often take part in decisions that affect the direction and color the mood of American politics.

"I've been doing this for at least 20 years," said Mike Chekal, a Republican precinct delegate from Farmington Hills. "It is as a civic duty. And I get a lot of satisfaction out of it."

Chekal took part in the 11th District caucus and will be involved with the county convention, and in all likelihood, the GOP state convention in Lansing Sept. 6.

Since caucuses and conventions often involve the toughest issues for a party, they can become heated.

"We've had floor fights over nominations in the past," said delegate Mark Steckloff. "We also elect the district and county organization."

Steckloff, who has been attending party functions since 1982, said Democratic debates issues involving public and private education as well as health care legislation in recent years. This year's Democratic state convention is at Cobo Hall in Detroit Sept. 6.

Steckloff, whose wife Vicki Barnett is a Hills councilwoman, said in addition to delegate and county delegates, a lot of social functions and informal discussion concerning politics at all levels takes place.

"A lot goes on outside in the halls and at the parties," he said.

Delegates need only three nominating signatures and are elected to represent the various precincts for their parties. This year, delegates will be elected in the Aug. 6 primary although many run unopposed. They will then nominate many of their party's candidates at the state convention in September for the November general election.

Sue Weisenfeld has been a delegate for 24 years, attending most state conventions. She also represented Detroit at the Democratic National Convention in

1980 in San Francisco where John F. Kennedy was nominated for president.

"I've been active in the party for 35 years," said the Farmington Hills resident. "But I encourage Republicans to vote too. That's the most important thing; that people vote so we can truly be a representative government."

Weisenfeld calls being a delegate "the grass roots job" of the party.

Farmington resident Karen Murphy, a Republican delegate for the second time, said she works the polls, hands out cam-

paign literature and does other work for the party.

"We do have a lot of say on issues," she said. "I enjoy it."

Delegates will nominate their party's candidates for the state Supreme Court, State Board of Education, the University of Michigan Board of Regents, Michigan State University Board of Trustees and the Wayne State University Board of Governors.

In gubernatorial elections, they also nominate candidates for lieutenant governor, secretary of state and attorney general.

Farmington prof is honored

Schoolcraft College conferred its highest honor — the Presidential Recognition Award — to Farmington resident Faye Schuett.

Schuett, associate professor of English, was cited for her "dynamic teaching and her commitment to the college."

In her classroom, Faye is a dynamic teacher, always devising new ways to present her material and get her students

involved," said Schoolcraft President Richard W. McDowell. "Sign up for a class with Faye and you get a warm, encouraging teacher who earns the respect of her students. And she is present at almost every college event."

Schuett earned a bachelor's degree from Illinois State University and her master's and doctorate degrees from the University of Tulsa.

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The forum will be cablecast at 1 and 3 p.m. Friday.

All three candidates trumpeted their involvement at the school and district levels. Candidates found common ground on spending, technology and educational equity issues.

Bouchard called attention to her background in speech pathology and consumer reporting, which she said would give her an insight on her constituents and an advocate as a board member.

Bouchard also addressed her residency. Her family lives in a portion of the Farmington school district that extends into West Bloomfield.

"I certainly feel attached to the

entire district," Bouchard said. "This is where my children go to school."

Brouillette continued to stress her background in business and technology. She and her husband Barry owned a software company. She also worked as a national account manager for AT&T.

Equal education and incorporating technology wisely would be her priorities, Brouillette said.

"So... to make sure all our students are comfortable with technology and computers regardless of what they have in their homes," she said.

Svoke cited district accomplishments, including numerous national exemplary awards and

accreditation bestowed on its schools.

"This effort does not just happen," Svoke said. "It takes a community with interest and support to set high expectations...."

Sibling priority and gifted education — two thorny issues in school circles — produced cautious responses.

Giving preference to siblings for openings at schools of choice, particularly Highmeadow Common Campus, is understandable, Bouchard said. She qualified her statement.

"Just because we've done things a certain way for awhile doesn't mean we shouldn't look for new ways that are innovative," Bouchard said.

Said Brouillette: "I think the high quality of education at Highmeadow should be the norm at all our buildings."

Svoke said he supported the current district policy, but added that it is being looked at as part of an ongoing study of elementary education.

"I'm looking forward to the report," he said.

More could be done at the elementary and middle school levels for gifted students, Brouillette said. Svoke agreed to an extent.

"First of all, I think that in Farmington all students are exceptional," Svoke said.

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resident.

Even during unsavory incidents — such as the recent hate letter incident at North Farmington High — Svoke can find a kernel of optimism.

"I think it gives us more experience in handling crisis situations," Svoke said.

His glowing assessments appeared to be based by results of a district-conducted survey, which indicated overwhelming satisfaction with the schools. Only 27 percent responded to the mail survey while 400 were interviewed by phone.

"That's still four times better than what citizens do at the polls," he said.

He was encouraged by the frankness that came out of the poll. Respondents said they wanted results and excellence, not just bouquets and pageantry.

Farmington schools has taken care of business by maintaining a healthy fund balance, Svoke said. The district will have to continue to look at salaries and

benefit structures as part of its \$129 million budget, especially as increases in state per-pupil aid decline.

"I just don't believe it's one area," he said. "I think we have to look at the overall picture."

A strong reserve fund has allowed the district to buy into technology such as hooking up to the Internet and Harrison High's Principals of Engineering program.

The Internet access will allow course offerings such as language instruction district-wide, Svoke said.

Instead of having to go to the intermediate school district, staff can do research via computer, thus saving time. Students can also send homework from home to school through e-mail, Svoke said.

The Internet price tag: \$3.4 million.

"If we do it now, it's one cost," Svoke said. "If we do it three years from now, it's another cost."

Technological innovations come at a time when the district is using portable classrooms to handle an overflow of students. Would money be better spent on building and site improvements?

Not at this time, Svoke said.

The district is conducting a facilities study, which provides answers on future building needs, Svoke said. Fluctuations in student population are also being monitored.

"There is not one board member, including myself, that likes the use of portables," Svoke added. "It's strictly a temporary measure."

Temporary wouldn't aptly describe Svoke's attention to school affairs.

He served on a district boundary committee. Other committee members decided to keep abreast of news by attending school board meetings.

After a few months, Svoke was the only one still attending.

He and his wife Rachel's four children: Christine, Leslie,

Katherine and J.T. are products of the Farmington schools. Katherine and J.T. attend Harrison High. Leslie is attending Western Michigan University while Christine is a recent graduate of her father's alma mater Lawrence Technological University.

Svoke, the son of a Michigan State Police trooper, moved around the state in his youth. He served in the U.S. Army in the late 60s.

He worked in manufacturing for 23 years, but was caught up in a corporate buyout and a subsequent downsizing of the company. At 47, he made a career change into computer and software.

"I guess that's one of the perspectives that I can bring: If you're not adaptable to change, you're in trouble," Svoke said.

"I fear for our children because of changes in the business world. I think that's something that has to come out of their education: They have to be self-reliant."

Farmington Observer

(USPS 187-840)

Published every Monday and Thursday by Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 809 E. Maple, Farmington, MI 48335-0910. Second-class postage paid at Farmington, MI. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 809 E. Maple, Farmington, MI 48335-0910. Telephone 313-953-2182.

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