

Patterson

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cow," he said, referring to Oakland's sending billions of dollars to Lansing, while getting little in exchange. He estimates the county gets about 66 cents back for every dollar it pays in taxes, although the exact figures vary.

"Oakland will always be a donor county, Patterson said. As a prosperous county, it will always pay more in taxes than it receives in road funds, mental health dollars or other state benefits.

"But we can make it a little more equitable," he said. "We've got to. We've got roads that need repair and we've got residents entitled to help. Even the Legislature realizes it can't kill the goose that lays the golden egg."

While that battle is on the horizon, Patterson said he's ready for the primary and the general elections. "I've done a good job," he said, "and I think voters realize it."

Indeed, Patterson is frequently mentioned as a possible gubernatorial candidate, if and when Engler — a friend as well as a political ally — chooses not to run.

Patterson, 57, is a graduate of both the University of Detroit and the U of D Law School. He was Oakland County Prosecutor for almost two decades before deciding not to run in 1988.

He and wife Kathy live in Waterford. It's a second marriage for both, and each has two grown children.

How to vote

Just because you are unable to get to a voting booth for the Aug. 6 primary does not mean your voice can't be heard.

Individuals eligible to vote by absentee ballot can obtain their ballot by visiting their local clerk's office by 4 p.m. Aug. 5.

People who wish to obtain an absentee voter ballot by mail must submit a signed ballot request to their city or township clerk no later than 2 p.m. Saturday, Aug. 3.

To vote in the Aug. 6 primary, individuals must be 18 years old on or before Aug. 6, a Michigan resident.

Hughes

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example, does Oakland County get little money for roads when its residents pay so much in gasoline taxes? Why does the county get so little back from Lansing when Oakland pays so much in state taxes?

The incumbent is too comfortable in the job, Hughes claims. That's why he insists voters should support him. "I'll bring a fresh view to government," he said. "I'll insist on more accountability and I won't stand for the status quo."

Hughes, a computer science graduate of Kent State University, promises to downsize government much the same way Kmart downsized its work force in order to be more competitive in the market.

"I'd roll up my sleeves and dig in," he said. Privatization can be a workable solution for some problems and downsizing would work for others.

But he'd shake things up and be a voice for all those disenfranchised voters out there who believe, as Hughes does, that the system has failed.

Hughes said he doesn't expect to spend much money in the

campaign. "I could spend thousands of dollars and not get the name recognition of the incumbent," he said.

But values count for something, Hughes insisted. Although he is not a member of the Christian Coalition, the challenger said his values are similar. He's against euthanasia and casino gambling. He's against abortion, especially partial-birth abortions.

Hughes believes government

should curtail its role in the lives of taxpayers. But he also believes that churches should do more. That's why he's active in the Outreach Program at St. John Lutheran Church where he and his family are members.

Kmart is more than a job for Hughes, it's a way of life. He started with the company as a part-time worker while studying at Kent State and when he graduated, he moved into the ranks

of the executives.

He even met his wife Syndi at Kmart where she was also part of the management team. When their first son, Nick, was born five years ago, Syndi worked part time. When daughter Kelli, now 2, was born, Syndi opted to stay home.

"It wasn't easy going from two salaries to one," he recently told the Oakland County Taxpayers Association. "But that was our choice. We downsized our cars, our budget and our lifestyle."

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