

# County executive candidate doesn't accept union money, won't talk to striking papers

BY PAT MURPHY  
STAFF WRITER

Edward T. Hamilton prides himself on being a "different kind of Democrat."

To illustrate, the Troy resident who is running against incumbent Oakland County Executive L. Brooks Patterson, points to two positions he took early in the campaign that culminate Nov. 6:

■ He refuses to accept any financial contributions from any unions.

■ He is declining to talk with the editorial boards of the two daily newspapers in Detroit that have been on strike for more than a year.

It's not that he is philosophically pro or anti union, the 53-year-old Hamilton said Tuesday. "It's just the way I see things," he said.

Hamilton said he will not take any contributions from unions, or other large pressure groups, because he prefers to be independent.

It's honest money and offered with good intentions, he said. "But when somebody makes a contribution," he said, "they usually expect to be treated differently."

He has talked with several union organizations, Hamilton said, and he seemed to connect. But as far as he knows, there were no big bucks coming his way.

"I'm not one of them," he said. "But I understand some of their concerns."

He said he recently turned down a request to be interviewed by The Detroit Free Press because the paper has been unable to negotiate a contract with its employees. He vowed the same response to its sister newspaper, The Detroit News.

Hamilton insisted he wasn't taking sides in the newspaper strike. But he'd just as soon not talk to a company that can't handle its labor relations better.

"We get along with unions in the auto industry," said Hamilton, a new vehicle launch manager with the Chrysler Corp. "Why can't newspapers get along with their people?"

Noting that Ford this week announced a tentative contract with its union workers, Hamilton said auto executives have made numerous adjustments to be competitive in the global market. Living with its employees is just one of them, he said.

That doesn't mean auto executives capitulated to the unions, Hamilton said.

"Auto workers are more productive than ever," he said. "The auto industry upgraded the skills of its workers, and it has learned to rely on them."

Hamilton said he would use a similar approach in county government, which he insists is blunted and inefficient.

"I wouldn't necessarily lay workers off," he said. "But I would insist they work smarter and more efficiently to deliver services."

Hamilton isn't happy with the newspaper strike, and he predicts there will be no winner in the traditional sense. Management has to cut costs, he said, but a strike isn't the answer. "neither is putting people out of work."

As a relative unknown in the political arena, Hamilton

## DEMOCRAT

**Edward T. Hamilton, 53, of Troy is a new vehicle launch manager for Chrysler.**

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**Edward T. Hamilton**

**County executive candidate**

acknowledges he could use the exposure talking to the two metro dailies would likely generate. After all, he's running against an incumbent who has a knack for managing media relations.

Other Democrats feel comfortable talking with the striking dailies, Hamilton admitted.

"But I've got some of my yard signs on the lawn of people out of work because of the strike. I can't do both."

To make up for any lack of newspaper stories—or endorsements—Hamilton said he is prepared to work harder.

"I'm into retail politics," he said, referring to what old line Democrats sometimes call grass roots politics.

"I'll hit events like the 'Troy Daze' (a festival last weekend) and I'll have to work harder," he said. "But I'm convinced that's the way to reach voters."

## Cooper mounts grass-roots campaign

RENEE SKOGLUND  
STAFF WRITER

Jessica Cooper, who is running as an independent for Michigan Supreme Court judge, sat in the conference room of St. Paul's Presbyterian Church in Livonia last Thursday. She was the noon-time guest speaker. But there was no audience.

"I think somebody running for the Michigan Supreme Court doesn't get much attention. It's not a media event," said Thomas Eggebeen, pastor at St. Paul's. "I would dare say that most folks don't know what the Michigan Supreme Court does, much more than an occasional ruling, myself included."

Cooper, currently an Oakland County Circuit Court judge, took her lack of an audience in stride. A minister and a reporter would have to do.

She has a single campaign goal for election to the Michigan Supreme Court: "Getting

the word out about maintaining the independence of the Court and maintaining it by integrity."

Cooper is running as an independent—minus a base of political power. That suits her just fine. She is following in the footsteps of retiring Justice Charles Levin, the first to run for the high court as an independent.

"We have a perception of partisanship. It comes from the fact that there is a partisan nomination. After that nomination, judges are expected to turn around and become non-partisan," said Cooper, who is facing two Democrats, two Republicans and two libertarians for the Supreme Court seat.

Without the financial help from big party coffers, Cooper has mounted a grassroots campaign. On a projected budget hovering around \$100,000, she has hand-delivered literature, sent out mailings, scheduled

interviews, done a few public radio and public television spots, and given speeches "anywhere there are two or three people."

"Whether that is strong enough in the face of the hundreds of thousands of dollars others have, I don't know. I've never lost before. Getting on the ballot is and of itself a win." Cooper was elected district judge in the Southfield 46th District Court in 1978 and reelected in 1984. She was elected to the Oakland County Circuit Court in 1986 and reelected in 1992.

The election is just seven weeks away. Cooper stands on her record.

"I have seen things I haven't wanted to see, made decisions I haven't wanted to make, but that's my job. I am not a politician. That's the issue. I talk solely about the court system. I'm a judge and that's what we want on the bench—judges."

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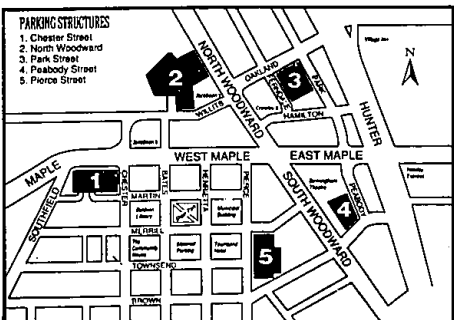
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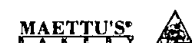
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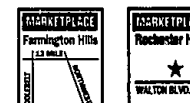


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