

Levin wins state with middle-of-the-road politicking

BY TIM RICHARD
STAFF WRITER

They partied in Michigan's poshest spot — a Westin Hotel ballroom in the Renaissance Center. They said nice things about General Motors and the suburbs. They talked about middle-class issues and never mentioned "diversity."

These were Michigan Democrats?

Yes, and their move to the middle of the political road paid off for U.S. Sen. Carl Levin, the congressional delegation, their

political bingos and the twin sports stadiums for Detroit.

"We had a positive campaign on issues the middle-class families and the working families of Michigan genuinely cared about," said Levin, 62, the only state Democrat ever to win four terms in the upper chamber of the U.S. Congress.

"We'll fight for education — more of it and more people having access to it. We'll fight for health care — protecting the seniors and the 10 million children who do not have health

insurance. We'll fight for the environment. . . We'll fight for campaign finance reform."

Levin won a 69 to 41 percent victory over former Republican Ronna Romney of Bloomfield Hills.

Romney didn't hold a separate party in Southfield, as she had after her primary victory, but combined forces with the state GOP in the Lansing Center.

"I thank Ronna. She called me tonight," Levin said. "She's a very graceful lady — one great, tough competitor who will land on her feet, one who could debate issues clearly and say what she believed in."

Romney said she hoped Levin would "cling to the Republican policies he has consistently espoused." Until the end, however, she stuck to her campaign theme that "I believe every day

should be the Fourth of July (Independence Day). Carl Levin believes every day should be April 15 (federal income tax deadline)."

Later returns showed voters handed Democrats a 66-44 percent victory by rejecting a GOP-passed state law prohibiting political parties from running bingos. Something like 95 percent of party-run bingos aid local Democratic organizations.

Democrats also celebrated turnaround time for Detroit-suburban relations.

"Two hundred elected officials from outside Detroit helped us with Proposal S," said Detroit Mayor Dennis Archer, heaping profuse thanks on Wayne County Executive Ed McNamara and deputy Michael Duggan, both Livonia residents, for backing the twin taxes for the twin sports stadiums.

"We're working as partners. That's what S was all about," said McNamara. "We'll have two stadiums and the best airport in the world with 17 overseas flights daily bringing in economic development and jobs."

"This airport couldn't have happened without (President) Bill Clinton," McNamara said of the Detroit Metro Airport expansion. "The last time he came in, he said, 'Carl (Levin) has bent my ear all the way from Washington about your damn airport. Yes, you can have that \$150 million' in federal aid."

Despite GOP complaints about \$36 million in union money helping Democrats, state chair Mark Brewer gave credit to a different twin-pronged strategy. "First, this fall we persuaded independents. Second, we worked the phones, mail, door-to-door canvassing with thousands of people

volunteering.

"We helped the education candidates with party events and editorial board interviews — more than the typical party does for those candidates. I don't believe in coattails, but Levin and Clinton did bring the total up," said Brewer, a Macomb County lawyer who has headed the party the last two years.

State Sen. Gary Peters, D-Bloomfield Township, facing no election this year, showed up in a casual sweater and said he spent the day working precincts for state Rep. Hubert Price, D-Pontiac, and Democratic House candidate Nancy Quarles in Southfield.

"We watched the House challenge to see that they didn't slow down the process in Pontiac," said Peters, indicating no problems occurred.

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