

County prosecutor candidates go in different directions

BY PAT MURPHY
STAFF WRITER

Sometime today, prosecutor-elect David Goreyca may be ready to announce the transition team he said will help him assume his new role as Oakland County's top law officer.

The team will be made up of eight people who are knowledgeable about legal matters, while simultaneously sensitive to the needs of the office, Goreyca said Friday.

"I've already contacted four people who have agreed to join the team," he said, "and I expect to be in touch with the others over the weekend."

The team's goal, Goreyca said, is to have adequate knowledge about concerns such as the budget (about \$14 million for 1997) and the legal issues confronting the office.

"I want to hit the ground running," said the 34-year-old Royal Oak resident, referring to Jon. 2, when he replaces Richard Thompson, the two-term incumbent Goreyca beat in the Republican primary.

High on his list of things to do as prosecutor, will be reviewing Oakland's case against Dr. Jack Kevorkian, the West Bloomfield resident with a national reputation for advocating physician assisted suicide.

Kevorkian's legal difficulties took a complicated turn last week when he was arrested on an indictment from the Ionia County Grand Jury for assisting in the suicide of mid-Michigan resident Loretta Peabody and the unauthorized practice of medicine. Peabody, 54, suffered from multiple sclerosis until her death on Aug. 30.

Kevorkian was arrested, handcuffed and whisked off to Ionia Thursday, something that angered his lawyer, Geoffrey N. Fieger, who said his client would have voluntarily surrendered.

Kevorkian was arraigned in Ionia and waived preliminary examination, which means he will go directly to circuit court. No trial date was immediately set for the retired pathologist who was released on bond.

Charges related to the suicide

of the Ionia woman are separate from charges in Oakland County, initiated by the lame duck Goreyca will replace.

Goreyca said his transition team will look at the 19 charges filed against Kevorkian last month. They were initiated by outgoing prosecutor Thompson, and thus Goreyca will inherit them.

"It would be inappropriate of me to comment on those cases right now," Goreyca said. "But that's one of the items my transition team will review so that I am ready to deal with it."

Throughout his campaign, Goreyca said existing common law — under which Kevorkian was charged — is, in effect, unenforceable. He has already asked Gov. John Engler and the legislature to either enact a workable law or take steps to make assisted suicide legal.

Although he didn't repeat the comment Friday, Goreyca indicated misgivings about Oakland's charges against Kevorkian. At the time Kevorkian was charged, Goreyca

declined to comment on whether they were appropriate without first looking at police reports and other data.

But he said, "I'll clean up the mess, if necessary."

Goreyca met with some of the almost 100 assistant prosecutors shortly after his upset victory over Thompson. At that time, he assured the staff there would be no "wholesale personnel changes."

That's still the case, he said Friday. "I want the staff to know I value competent, hard-working people."

Goreyca said he has not conferred with Thompson yet. "But I fully expect to meet with him in the near future."

Goreyca had a roller coaster ride to the prosecutor's office. As a relative unknown, he was the decided underdog against the well-known incumbent seeking a third term.

Then as election results came in Tuesday, Democrat Steven Kaplan was initially declared the winner by a paper-thin margin.

Goreyca was a loser for about

six hours. The initial returns showing Kaplan the winner were incorrect, and the revised count had Goreyca the victor.

Kaplan, the prosecutor-elect for about six hours, congratulated Goreyca Thursday. But on Friday, he declined to offer any advice about the transition.

"Who am I to offer advice?" Kaplan said.

Kaplan was back at his job as Macomb County assistant prosecutor Thursday, but he did get a moment of recognition Friday in the Oakland County auditorium.

After presiding Judge Edward Sosnick administered the oath of

office to a group of new lawyers, he introduced Kaplan, a West Bloomfield resident who was there on behalf of one of the new lawyers.

"I cited Mr. Kaplan as an example of professionalism," Sosnick said. "He was prosecutor-elect for a few hours, and then somebody else was declared the winner."

"But instead of whining about it, Mr. Kaplan was gracious. He didn't complain or blame anyone. He accepted it as a professional."

Kaplan received a standing ovation.

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Spreading peace 2 honored for community effort

The Cranbrook Peace Foundation has selected the first two recipients of their annual Peace Award — Sister Helen Prejean, author of "Dead Men Walking" and Oscar-winning actress Susan Sarandon, who played Sister Helen in the made-for-movie version.

During a 7:30 p.m. awards ceremony at the Detroit Institute of Arts Theatre, the pair will be recognized by Detroiters Marietta Jaeger, "for their work toward the abolition of the death penalty in the United States," Jaeger, also an internationally known

campaigner against the death penalty, will present the awards.

In writing her internationally acclaimed book, Sister Helen called upon her own experiences as a counselor for death row inmates and the families of the murder victims. Her book was published by Random House in June 1993 for United States circulation. Presently, there are contracts under way for translation into French, German and

Japanese.

Tickets for 9th annual Peace Lecture and award ceremony are available for \$10, with an option to attend an afterglow reception for \$35. Reception tickets must be purchased in advance. For more information or to purchase tickets, call (313) 824-3704.

Sarandon is on location out of the country making a film and will not be present to receive her award.



Sister Helen Prejean

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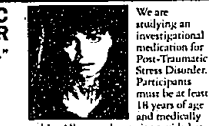
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