

Name recognition was high among Oakland voters

BY LAURIE HUMPHREY
STAFF WRITER

The money spent on Tuesday's election can be mind boggling to some, but evidently the money paid out was off.

Oakland County voters, for the most part, recognized the names of those candidates who spent thousands, even millions, when they went to the polls Nov. 5. When asked if there were any names unrecognizable, those who gave any names were unanimous in their answer: judges, the state board of education and those running for board seats for area educational institutions. What did they do when faced with determining the fate of

unknown people? It all depends on whom you asked.

"If I didn't recognize the names, I didn't vote (in that category)," explained Laura Green, a junior English major at Oakland University in Rochester Hills.

Tom Mahoney, of Bloomfield Hills, had a different system.

"If it's a choice between two names I don't recognize, I vote for the woman," he said, quickly qualifying his answer. "I just think there should be more women in public service," he said, because they tend to be more sensitive to all sides affecting an issue.

Yet, there were many judges

familiar to Mahoney, so he did not find a great need to rely on his system this year.

When Ralph Kotoff, a Birmingham library patron, didn't recognize a name at the polls, he voted for the Democratic choice.

"I am a union steward with the letter carrier," said the Royal Oak man, "and I marked the ballot in every instance."

Matthew Henderson, an OU sophomore majoring in electrical engineering, "just picked one."

So did Jeff Melow, another OU sophomore.

Teresa Seefeldt, a second year graduate student at OU, would rather pick someone, than leaving it blank.

"At least that way, you're doing something," said the applied statistics student, who traditionally favors one party over another. "I vote very Democrat, but I like to see a good balance."

Pat Mahon of Beverly Hills never found herself in the "name game" predicament.

"I studied the issues and the candidate's answers beforehand," she said.

By reading the 1996 League of Women Voters guide, which she picked up at Baldwin Library in Birmingham, she was able to get all the background information on the political hopefuls, their views on controversial issues

and learn what they felt were the top challenges of the job. She was also able to learn about the various proposals, including the initiative affecting veterans' funds.

When pressed for an answer what she would do if she did not know the candidates for a particular race, she said "if they list their party (Republican or Democrat) I vote for the party."

Julie Diehl, of Birmingham also did her homework before casting her ballot.

"I take this very seriously," she said. "I read magazines, newspapers, used the Internet..." all to gather information on the candidate's and the Proposals.

Needless to say, she said she was able to respond to every question as an educated voter.

While everyone insinuated they tried to be as educated as possible in making their decisions, the factor of overwhelming importance seemed to be the vote.

Whether it was the millions of dollars spent on advertising, the whirlwind of campaign appearances or the debates on television that sparked the interest of Oakland County voters, the desire to have a say in future policy making was there.

Over 61 percent of Oakland County voters, about 510,000 people, cast a ballot Nov. 5.

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