

Doctor to run for governor's office on health issues

BY TIM RICHARD
STAFF WRITER

As you'd expect, Dr. Gary Artinian is running for governor on health issues.

The Bloomfield Township cardiologist is challenging fellow Republican John Engler — or anyone else, if Engler drops out — for the chief executive nomination in 1998. Artinian, 63, is a fiscal and environmental conservative who thinks the state could do even more than Engler has done to cut payroll and regulation and put more into its physical plant, especially roads.

"I don't think he's going to run. But it's moot," Artinian said during an interview in his office on Telegraph Road. "Frankly, he's done some good things. But we have term limits in the Legislature, and we need fresh blood, a clean slate."

How would he be different from Engler?

"The governor has washed his hands of medical regulation by flipping things over to HMOs (health maintenance organizations). That affects the working poor, because the upper 80 percent have insurance. It also affects senior citizens who can't afford Aricept (the \$10 pill that treats the Alzheimer's affliction)."

"A lot of for-profit HMOs are forming, particularly to pick up Medicaid patients in the cities. There's money there. By denying care and first-class medication, they can smell profits in Michigan. Some of the for-profits are OK, but HMOs leave a lot to be desired."

"The word 'managed' refers to money, not to the health of a person."

Artinian says the state has handled Lyme disease, which originates with the deer herd, as "a political and public relations problem rather than a health problem. There has been stonewalling by the state. Why? Because it would hurt tourism."

He faults Engler's director of community health, James K. Haveman, for being a social worker in a job that needs a medical doctor or osteopath with a degree in public health. "There are lots of people out there," he said.

Artinian has had two tastes of public office. From 1985-92 he was an elected member of the Wayne State University board, where, his biography boasts, he was "the only member to vote no on every single tuition increase." He also served four years on the State Board of Medicine as an Engler appointee.

"I've worked on a lot of campaigns in 30 years," Artinian said, citing Engler, U.S. Sen. Spencer Abraham, U.S. Reps. Joe Knollenberg, Dick Chrysler, Fred Upton, Nick Smith, Pete Hookstra and former county executive Dan Murphy.

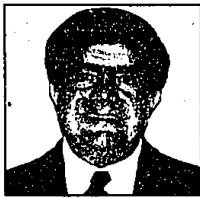
IMP's ratings

Artinian makes about six to eight appearances a month, mostly in Wayne and Oakland counties but also outside. Michael Dorfman, a law student and former aide to state Rep. John Jamian, is his campaign coordinator.

He is hiring Carlyle Gregory, who handled House Speaker Newt Gingrich's first run for Congress in the 1970s, as a consultant and Lisa Friel of Washington, D.C., as fund raiser. "In the last four to six weeks, fund-raising has become easier. By the end of July, we ought to pass the \$100,000 mark," Artinian said.

Much of the help, Dorfman added, comes from physicians who feel neglected by Lansing.

Bill Ballenger, in his Inside Michigan Politics newsletter, said the doctor does well in polls. "It's easy to take Artinian lightly, but he's been elected



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Dr. Gary Artinian
Bloomfield Township
cardiologist

statewide once. Moreover, ethnicity and geography position him more strongly against (Senate majority leader Dick) Posthumus at the outset than most observers realize."

If Oakland Executive Brooks Patterson and Knollenberg decide against making the 1998 race against Posthumus, IMP's poll gives Posthumus 21 percent, Artinian 14, and state Sen. John Schwarz (the Senate's only physician) 8 as of March 31. "Posthumus is a slight favorite, but certainly not overwhelming," Ballenger wrote.

The issues

Artinian faults Engler for being in too big a rush to shut down state mental hospitals, notably the Lafayette Clinic where much research is done, and where Artinian once worked.

On other issues, Artinian said: ■ Roads: "You need to set aside part of your assets for your physical plant. Roads have been ignored. We need quality control, particularly on the cement."

■ Taxes: Despite Engler's 21 tax cuts, Artinian says the total burden has been cut just from 11.3 or 11.4 percent of total income to 10.7 percent.

■ Department of Natural Resources: "Citizens who own wetlands or floodplains were supposed to have been notified on their tax bills that their property was subject to regulation. That was never done," said Artinian, who said he plants 300 to 400 trees a year on his northern property. "Regulation of the environment has kind of gone overboard. When it comes to the family versus rats and weeds and bugs, I'm for the family."

■ Schools: He is sympathetic to the PROBE group that picketed Engler's school-to-work conference and protests a job-oriented career preparation program. "I'm a product of the public schools," said the Highland Park native whose wife and two sisters are school teachers. He dislikes the way teachers have been made scapegoats for the system.

■ The GOP: Though aligned with the party's right-wing on some education issues, Artinian wants it to be less doctrinaire and "be more inclusive. That's the only way we'll be successful."

Mike Dorfman answers the phone in the Artinian for Governor headquarters, 248/334-GARY.

Blood donors sought

Listed below are some Red Cross Bloodmobiles for the month of July:

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July 2: Farmington Hills — Holiday Inn, 10 a.m.-2 p.m., (248) 422-2787.

July 11: Troy — Birmingham Chrysler Plymouth, 10 a.m.-4

p.m., (248) 643-7000.

July 14: Farmington Hills — North Congregational Church, 2-

8 p.m., (248) 848-1750.

July 17: Southfield — Met Life, 8:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m., (248) 363-1157.

July 18: Birmingham — First of America, 8:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m., (248) 901-2470.

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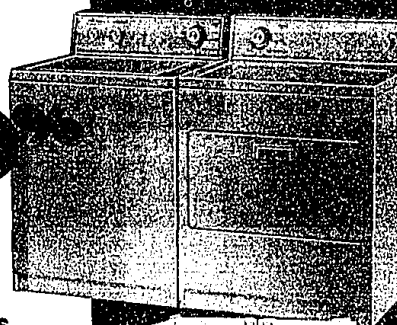
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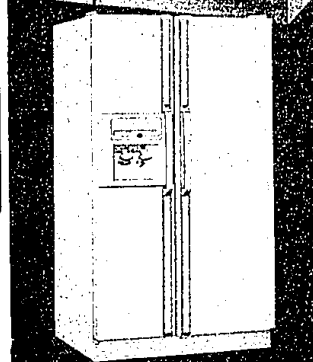
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