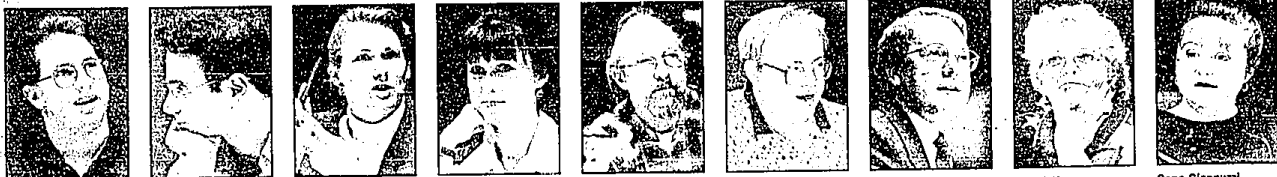


POINTS OF VIEW



Justin Kuxhaus Khalil S. Kandah Cynthia A.W. Stickley Annalee Morrison Jim Rhoades Alfred H. Phillips Timothy J. King Val Wolf Gena Giannuzzi

# Observer readers speak out at election roundtable

The following area residents participated in the Observer Newspapers Election Roundtable on Sept. 23 and 24. The Sept. 23 discussion, moderated by editors Joanne Maliszewski and Tedd Schneider focused on the Michigan gubernatorial race. Thursday's discussion centered on the statewide ballot proposals. It was moderated by editors Dave Varga and Leonard Poger. Featured today is the gubernatorial discussion. On Thursday, the the ballot issues will be discussed.

Readers from throughout the Observer circulation were given an opportunity to join the panel and express their opinions.

► **GENA GIANNUZZI**, 32, is a stay-at-home mom who holds a bachelor's of science degree in psychology and public administration. Her community involvement is Right-to-Life



and schools. Her election issues are assisted suicide, abortion and education.

► **KHALIL S. KANDAH**, 33, has two years of college and has completed an apprenticeship. He is employed as an electrician at Chrysler Corp. He is a UAW member. He never misses an election. He is the father of two children. His issues are public education, workers rights, taxes and roads in that order. He lives in Canton Township.

► **TIMOTHY J. KING**, 47, holds a master's degree in rehab counseling. He has four children who attend Redford Union Schools. A Redford Township resident, he describes himself as a "soccer dad." His issues are campaign finance reform, support of public education, land use (urban sprawl), environment, health care, insurance regulation, privatization or government services and mental health policy - in that order. He works as a vocational rehab consultant in the private sector.

► **JUSTIN KUXHAUS**, 15, is a Close-Up student at Plymouth Canton High School. Close-Up is a sophomore level class designed to teach about local, state and national government and to prepare students for active citizenship. Part of

the class involves a trip to Washington, D.C. Close-Up is a required course at Plymouth Canton High school. He was interested in the election roundtable because he wants to be an active citizen when he is 18 and can vote. He lives in Canton Township.

► **ANNALEE MARLETTE MORRISON**, 38, lives in Farmington. She is a part-time secretary and homemaker. She has a bachelor's degree from Northwood University. Her community involvement includes Cub Scouts and the community building of a playground.

► **ALFRED H. PHILLIPS**, 64, is retired from GM. He lives in Livonia. He holds a bachelor's of science degree in mechanical engineering and a master's in business administration. His professional affiliations

includes Brown University Engineering Association. He is president of the Mendel Hearts (support group). He also is active in a food distribution group. His issues are physician-assisted suicide, school system improvements (particularly Detroit), election of environmentally-conscious candidates, election of those opposed to privatizing Social Security.

► **JIM RHODES** of Garden City has an associate's degree in architecture. He is self-employed in Remco Remodeling and Design. He is a member of the National Remodelers Association. He is 48 and his issues are education (teacher accountability), crime reduction, tax reduction and government reduction.

► **CYNTHIA A.W. STICKLEY**, 35, of

Farmington Hills is a chemist at EFPEC North America LLC. She holds a bachelor's of science degree in chemistry from the University of Michigan and a master's in science from the University of Detroit. Her professional affiliation is the American Chemical Society. Her community involvement is the Salvation Army. She lives in Farmington Hills. Her No. 1 issue is physician-assisted suicide.

► **VAL WOLF**, 51, of Wayne works as an office manager. Her community involvement includes the Wayne Cable Commission and Citizens (a service group). Her issues are health care, Social Security, crime and honesty. She attended college for two years.

## ► PROPOSAL B:

### Livonia man delivers plea of support

BY MARIE CHESTNEY  
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Calling it the "ultimate government intrusion into a person's personal life," members of the Observer Newspapers' election roundtable overwhelmingly rejected the idea of legalizing physician-assisted suicide in Michigan.

Only two supported Proposal B, Alfred Phillips of Livonia and Khalil Kandah of Canton.

Phillips couldn't dispute the fact that, once passed, physician-assisted suicide brings government right into the life of the terminally ill.

If confirmed terminally ill by a psychiatrist and two physicians, Michigan residents could get a lethal dose of medication to end their lives.

Doctors would report the death to a gubernatorially appointed oversight committee that is exempt from the Open Meetings Act and the Freedom of Information Act.

"But if we don't have a law like this, families can be prosecuted if they help (end a life)," said Phillips, who has had two open heart surgeries, angioplasty, stroke, heart attack and artery surgery, and who admitted he has "thought about suicide."

While Kandah said he does not back physician-assisted suicide, he does see a benefit to having the concept written into law. It would end the Kevorkian "circus," he said, referring to Jack Kevorkian, the chief practitioner of physician-assisted suicide.

"My religious beliefs would not

allow me to do this," he said. "But this would bring order into the process. This law would prevent people outside Michigan from here. I could change my mind if I discovered a loophole that would allow people around the country to flock to Michigan to get killed. If people vote no on this, then we'll just end up having what we have now."

Gov. John Engler recently signed a bill making assisting a suicide a felony, punishable by five years in prison and a fine of up to \$10,000 for those who assist and those who have knowledge of a planned assisted suicide.

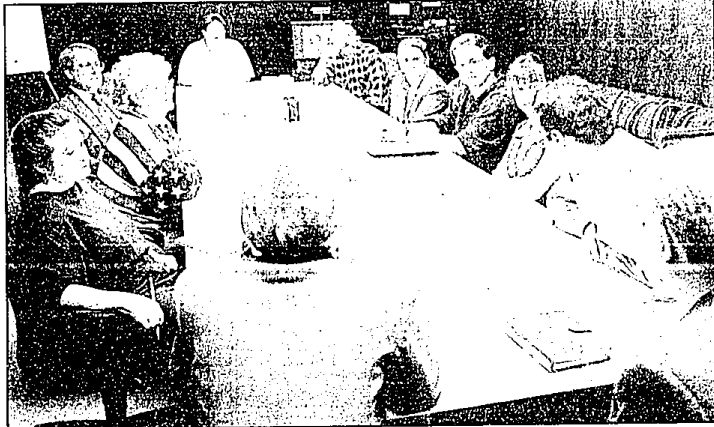
The new law doesn't apply to withholding or withdrawing medical treatment.

If passed, Proposal B would overturn the new felony law and replace it with one providing guidelines for assisted suicide, or Proposal B. The actual 12,000-word law has been reduced to the necessary 100 words on the Nov. 3 ballot.

The panelists' debate on Proposal B lasted the longest and drew the most heated, opinionated, and heartfelt comments.

Adding to the drama, Phillips recounted his poor medical condition and told how much he wanted to have the option of physician-assisted suicide if his health deteriorated to the point he had just six months to live.

"I don't think any of us has ever felt like I have about this issue," Phillips said. "You don't understand how I feel. I can't think of an individual right more precious than what I want to do with my body. Nobody has the right to



STAFF PHOTO BY BULL BRASLER

keep me from killing myself. I should be able to call upon someone to help me without them worrying about being prosecuted."

But Phillips' plea to legalize physician-assisted suicide was drowned out by all the complications panelists feared Proposal B would bring.

Val Wolf of Wayne fears a law where people would get killed and records of the death would be inaccessible.

She also believes that a brief psychiatrist exam is meaningless.

Cynthia Stickley of Farmington Hills fears a "slippery slope," where rules on the "right to die" would give way to "an obligation to die."

She fears Proposal B will open up a "Pandora's box" eventually

leading to euthanasia, where only the "fit and healthy" are allowed to live.

"Imagine the pressure (medical insurance groups) would put on individuals to go the cheap route," Stickley said. "It's a slippery slope, once you take away the idea that all human life has value."

To buttress her point, she recounted how abortion has gone from first-trimester abortion to six-month abortions to partial-birth abortion in some states.

She also fears that persons told they have just six months to live won't get the chance to live long enough to prove the doctor wrong.

Jim Rhoades of Garden City fears Proposal B will bring more bureaucracy, more court cases, and more legal challenges.

"This will do the same thing as the alcohol laws," Rhoades said. "Drinking and driving laws have created more revenue for lawyers. This will tie up the courts. It will create a monster."

Justin Kuxhaus of Canton fears a world where physicians who are sworn to save lives can now end them.

Timothy King of Redford took those fears one step further - he sees a world where doctors become ambulance chasers.

"I don't trust that the system will be that pure," King said. "I see some real potential for abuse. I don't think that, as a society, we are mature enough to regulate this."

Instead of one Jack Kevorkian, Gena Giannuzzi of Westland fears

a Michigan where "many little Kevorkians" operate throughout the state.

After voicing their fears, panelists listened to Phillips' final words: "You voted yes on the environmental bill, but that bill could be misused. No bill is perfect."

"This would make it easier for me, if I don't want to live anymore."

Despite his opposition to Proposal B, Rhoades voiced the dilemma Michigan voters face as they debate the pros and cons of legalizing physician-assisted suicide.

"That's what's missing here: We can't imagine the pain these people are in to drive them to want to end their life. It's incomprehensible to us."

## ► PROPOSAL C:

### Clean water, clean parks 'worth going into debt'

BY MARIE CHESTNEY  
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Of the three ballot proposals, Proposal C, or the Clean Michigan Initiative, is the only one unanimously backed by our election roundtable.

"There's some things in the proposal we have to worry about," said Val Wolf of Wayne.

Worrisome details include a smaller-than-wished-for amount of money spent to improve state parks, and too much money spent to bail corporations out of cleaning up contaminated sites, they said.

But, on balance, the Observer election roundtable liked the idea of going into debt to return some "clean water, clean parks and clean communities" to Michigan.

Looking back, they remembered the environmental turmoil that came from the \$600 million bond issue Michigan voters approved in 1988.

So they liked the idea of more of the same: \$336 million spent on brownfield redevelopment and environmental cleanup; \$90 million spent on improving water quality; \$50 million spent on pollution control grants; \$60 million on local parks and recreation; \$50 million on state park revitalization; \$50 million on waterfront revitalization; \$25 million on cleanup of contaminated sediments; \$20 million on pollution prevention; and \$5 million on lead hazard control.

The sheer magnitude of the bond issue - \$375 million - is what gave Jim Rhoades of Garden City the jitters. "We're floating a really big bond. If the economy turns down, who will pay for it?"

Money for repayment of the bonds will come from the state's general fund. This is spelled out in the ballot question.

Gena Giannuzzi of Westland is pleased the money will be spent to

protect the environment, not to build sports arenas.

Bocanis Michigan is a tourist mecca, and the state treasury depends on money spent by tourists, the state should work hard to keep both Michigan and its lakes clean, said Khalil Kandah of Canton.

His support of the ballot proposal came with one caveat: All the work done to clean up the land and waters of Michigan should be done by Michigan companies, with Michigan workers.

The bulk of the bond issue - \$336 million - will be spent on brownfield redevelopment. This is the issue that generated most of the talk at the focus group table.

Brownfields are a state-authorized way to revitalize land not now being used because of environmental contamination. They allow communities to use captured tax dollars to clean up and develop contami-

nated sites.

Does this let the corporations off the hook? asked Alfred Phillips of Livonia. He added: "I believe corporations have to be pulled and dragged to do anything about the environment."

Even so, brownfield legislation, passed in 1995 by the Michigan Legislature, can make unusable land usable once again, the group agreed. And that benefits both city dwellers as well as folks living out in the country.

"I want to see Detroit redeveloped. I live close to it, in Redford," said Timothy King.

Cynthia Stickley of Farmington Hills recalled her father talking about swimming in the Rouge River.

"Then it got to be a health hazard. We've done a lot to clean up the environment. We still have a ways to go."

## ► PROPOSAL A:

### Confusion clouds word change

Proposal A's goal is simple: Change the word handicapped to disabled in the Michigan Constitution. The Americans with Disabilities Act uses the word disabled, not handicapped. So do many state laws.

Yet five members of the Observer focus group rejected the change.

Jim Rhoades of Garden City called it a "feel good" piece of legislation.

Alfred Phillips of Livonia, who has a handicapped sticker on his license plate, said the proposal is a way to "make things politically correct."

"The word handicapped has never bothered me," Phillips said. "It's not a big deal. Why waste our time on this?"

Khalil Kandah of Canton didn't like the idea of changing the constitution "without input or understanding" of what is being done.

Taking a more philosophical view, Val Wolf of Wayne said it didn't make much difference which word is used as long as "they get what they deserve."

Proposal A was placed on the ballot by the Michigan Legislature. It will amend Article VIII, Section 8 of the Michigan Constitution.

The change creates no financial fallout. It is on the ballot to make the laws of the State of Michigan conform with "current conventions and with federal laws, such as the Americans With Disabilities Act," according to the Citizens' Research Council of Michigan.