

Dibert from page A1

If Dibert defeats Republican incumbent Andrew Raczkowski in the Tuesday, Nov. 3, election, and wins a two-year term, he promises to return to more of that Dolan-esque style of representation for the district.

"I've proven that I've served my community," said the 31-year-old Dibert, a Farmington resident. "I've done a lot in the past two years to help this community on the issues that matter. From education to combating urban sprawl."

Dibert, who has been accused of taking potshots of his own at Raczkowski, particularly through his self-penned Dibert Document, added that "You have such polarized bickering going on in Lansing right now. And the Democrats do it as well."

"What we really need up there is somebody who can basically say, 'Look, let's get this on. The people sent us up here to do a job and we better damn well do it.'"

He'd even set up an office in downtown Farmington, to talk to residents on Mondays and Fridays when the Michigan House of Representatives is not in session.

One thing can be said about

Dibert. He isn't afraid to roll up his sleeves and do some unconventional things.

For example, he washes windows for a living. He recently worked a couple weeks helping out with counter assistance at the Farmington Bakery. In 1997, when he was a resident at Independence Green, he and neighbors worked together to help address concerns about the complex.

And Dibert has gone through two pairs of shoes walking along the campaign trail. He estimates he's knocked on 5,000 doors to tell people about his viewpoints on state and local issues; only a few actually slammed the door in his face.

Earning respect

According to Dibert, who toiled this year on the business restaurant task force subcommittee of the Wayne State University-led Downtown Visioning Task Force, getting his shoes dirty indicates what kind of approach he'd take to Lansing.

"Our basic slogan is 'because we deserve better,'" said Dibert during an interview last week at the Farmington Observer. "And

this community does deserve better, from their state government, from their representatives

"This community has been shortchanged for years and years and years. It's about time it gets the respect that it deserves."

If it does, Dibert said it would be easier to fix up crumbling roads in the district. To that end, he'd support legislation to distribute road money based on population and actual lane miles.

"It's pretty odd that Washtenaw County gets the same amount of money as Wayne and Oakland counties, and they have half the population and half the lane miles," Dibert lamented. "Oakland County contributes more to the general (state) fund than 64 counties combined."

More money also should be allocated for road maintenance and repair, Michigan Department of Transportation contractors need to be "held responsible for cost overruns and quality control," and attention should be directed toward fixing up existing roads before committing to new ones.

Dibert favors raising the diesel

fuel tax to 19 cents per gallon, the same amount as the gasoline tax. And reducing truck weight limits from 164,000 to 80,000 pounds — although that wouldn't be popular with the trucking industry — could take the load off roads, provided such a program be phased in over three or four years.

Lowering truck weights, by itself, wouldn't be enough. The candidate said police need to do a better job enforcing highway speed limits for trucks. Faster, fully loaded semis do serious damage and need to be kept in check, Dibert explained.

'Home rule' rules

If he goes to Lansing, he'd fight for local governments being able to make tough decisions without interference from the state.

The final say so on whether or not to permit the drilling of oil wells under I-275, for example, should be made by city councils or township boards, not by a state bureaucrat, Dibert said.

Meanwhile, education and abortion are two hot election issues where Dibert has different opinions than his Republican

opponent. He wouldn't favor reducing the number of public school districts, as Raczkowski does. Establishing so-called super school districts, such as one including Traverse City and Kalkaska schools, also isn't on his "to do" list.

Maintaining local control is essential. That point is something Dibert and Raczkowski agree on.

"Let's say Farmington decided to merge with Livonia and Clarenceville," Dibert said. "No. 1, Farmington would be a big loser in it. We have a much better school district and we get more money per student ... So it would end up robbing Peter to pay Paul."

Education compass

Dibert does not like the idea of dropping certification for superintendents and principals or eliminating a mandatory core curriculum.

About the latter, "You need some kind of road map, that needs to be up to world standards."

Granting charters to former private schools is something Dibert said he would support — if

there is a void that needs to be filled, and can't be financially taken care of by the existing public school districts.

"If you want a charter school for auto mechanics, and the district can't fund it, then I'd be in favor of charter schools."

About abortions, Dibert said he'd oppose prohibiting them: as a health benefit for public employees; in hospitals run by the state, cities, counties or universities.

"Roe vs. Wade gives a woman an right to an abortion — period," Dibert said. "Right to Life might not like it. John Engler might not like it. Andrew Raczkowski might not like it. But that's the law of the land."

But he'd back repealing the state ban on Medicaid-paid abortions.

"Does a woman who can't afford an abortion, is she any different from the woman who can't afford it? No. And she can't have equal access to the same type of medical reproductive rights as people with money," Dibert said.

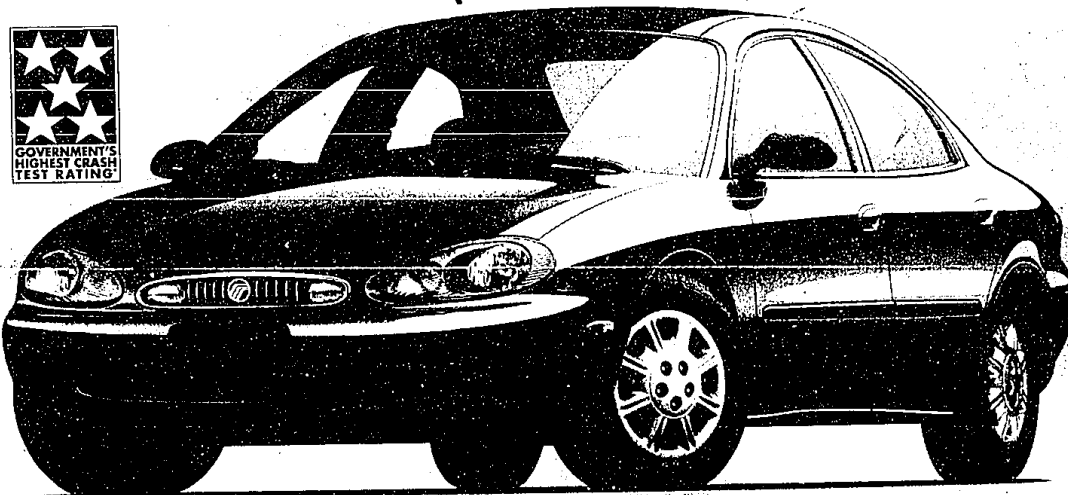
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