

POINTS OF VIEW

Observer readers speak out at election roundtable



Gena Giannuzzi



Khalil S. Kandah



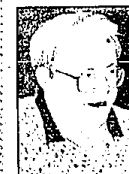
Timothy J. King



Justin Kuxhaus



Annalee Morrison



Alfred H. Phillips



Jim Rhoades



Cynthia A.W. Stickley



Val Wolf

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 Todd 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 Fogor. Featured today is the gubernatorial discussion. On Thursday, the ballot issues will be discussed. Readers from throughout the Observer circulation area 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 of 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.

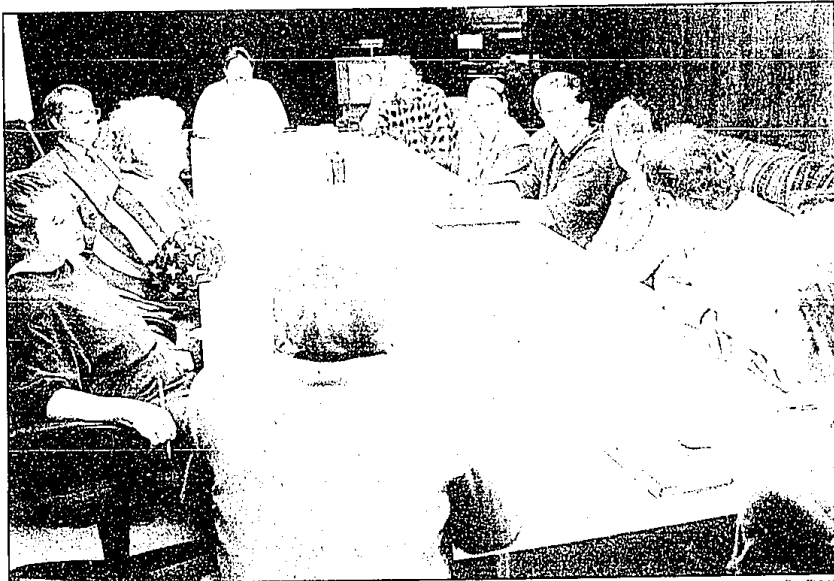
► **ANNALEE MARLETTE MORRISON**, 38, lives in Farmington. She is a part-time secretary and homemaker. She has a bachelor's degree from Northwood University. Her community involvement includes Cub Scouts and the community building of a playground.

► **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 Engineers Association. He is president of the Mended 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 RHOADES** of Garden City has an associate's degree in architecture. He is self-employed in Romeo 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 EFTEC 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**, 61, of Wayne works as an office manager. His community involvement includes the Wayne Cable Commission and Civitans (a service group). Her issues are health care, Social Security, crime and honesty. She attended college for two years.



STAFF PHOTOS BY BILL DEKORER

Community voices: Discussing issues at the Observer Election Roundtable on Sept. 23 were (clockwise, from far left) Gena Giannuzzi, Val Wolf, Timothy King, reporter Tony Bruscato, Jim Rhoades, Cynthia Stickley, Justin Kuxhaus, Annalee Marlette Morrison, Khalil Kandah and editors Todd Schneider and Joanne Maliszewski.

Among citizens' concerns: Morality, education, taxes

BY TONY BRUSCATO
STAFF WRITER
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There was no shortage of opinions concerning Gov. John Engler, his Democratic challenger Geoffrey Fieger, the state of Michigan's educational and road systems, and the state of morality and religion in political campaigns when eight members of the Observer Election Roundtable met recently to discuss the state's gubernatorial race.

"I'm worried about health care, education and morality," said Val Wolf of Wayne, who has been active politically for 33 years. "I care about children, and those of us interested in social issues, including education, are underrepresented," noted Cynthia Stickley of Farmington Hills.

A mother of three, Gena Giannuzzi of Westland said she's "very concerned how someone like Geoffrey Fieger could be a candidate for governor."

And a "very conservative" Jim Rhoades of Garden City, active in politics for 25 years, has a "real concern about crime issues and individual rights."

Annalee Morrison of Farmington, Timothy King of Redford, along with Justin Kuxhaus and Khalil Kandah, both of Canton, helped round out the forum designed to give readers a chance to tell us what's important to them in the November election. Some of the ideas merged with the candidates' views, while others might be good food for thought by those running for public office.

Governor's race

The first step was to find out where everyone stood on the candidates.

And, as you might expect, the split somewhat parallels the current polls. Six of the panel favored Engler, one supported Fieger, and another thought neither candidate should represent Michigan.

"I have a hard time supporting Fieger after he said Jesus was a goobull," said Stickley. "I like Engler and his tax cuts. I want charter schools and school vouchers."

"I support Engler because he has created educational equity," said Rhoades. "Geoffrey Fieger has the class of a back-alley punk. He says things I wouldn't say to my associates, and I hang out with biker trash."

"Fieger is a religious bigot," added Giannuzzi. "He represents those who are very extreme left, so I would have to

backup because of construction. Our panel had differing ideas of whether the timing was right for road construction, or is it simply an election-year ploy.

"We're nationally known for having the worst roads," said Kuxhaus. "In my opinion, Engler is fixing them now so voters will like him."

Kandah agrees, saying "it's almost scandalous what's happened to the roads since 1990. I work on the weekends and the roads are always shut down. It's election-year politics as usual."

"When Engler became governor the state was in debt," said Stickley. "He balanced the budget, his next priority was education, and now he's addressing the roads. I can see the logical progressions."

Just five minutes

If given five minutes with the candidates, these panel members knew exactly what they would tell Gov. Engler or Geoffrey Fieger.

"I would talk to Engler, because he's going to be governor anyway, and tell him to be a cheerleader of public education, not of private schools," noted King. "I haven't seen anything of substance from Fieger, not even a platform."

The religious vote

Should religion and politics mix in a political campaign? "Religious views mean almost little to me," said Kandah, a church-going Catholic. "Religious issues are a personal view, not a government thing. Mixing religion and politics doesn't go well."

"I think there's a lot of confusion between religion and Christian beliefs," added Rhoades. "Morals and ethics are muddled by people who think it's being religious."

"I will vote for someone no matter what religion," said Stickley, a self-proclaimed evangelical Christian. "I don't see issues like abortion and assisted suicide as religious, but moral issues. However, maybe my religious views do have something to do with it ..."

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self. If you take public office, then you do things for the public. You put your personal beliefs to the side."

Campaign propaganda

Our panel members were turned off by political jousting in campaign ads. They want to hear facts, not fiction.

"If I see commercials with bad mouthing, it just turns me off and you've lost your vote from me," said Morrison. "I just want to see the facts, what you stand for."

"Republicans have to outspend Democrats because the liberal media pretty much covers the Democrats," added Giannuzzi. "To get out the more conservative moral message needs additional funds because it's not going to be reported."

"Campaigning really disappoints me. The negative ads and personal attacks are the rule, compared to the boring stuff like the issues," said King. "We should have 100 percent financing of campaigns. If I had no money, name recognition and lots of money I could get elected."

Wolf adds "I think the ads by Engler on what he's done and what he stands for are very good. There needs to be a debate. I haven't seen anything of substance from Fieger, not even a platform."

"We should thank him for being himself," added Morrison. "At least he's not taking us for fools."

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