

Finances from page A1

donations came from political action committees, including a \$5,000 contribution from Raczowski's own Leadership PAC, which amassed more than \$120,000 in contributions according to a report filed in May of this year.

The Leadership PAC, he said, was established to lend financial support to other Republican candidates and ensure a continued majority in the Legislature.

While the re-election committee's next report isn't due until July 28, Raczowski said he will soon post donor information on his own website, www.CitizensFirst2000.com. He sees money as a secondary issue, but acknowledges it is a competitive issue.

Neither Borregard nor Vagnozzi feels it should be.

Both oppose funding from special interest groups, although Vagnozzi has agreed to take those donations because Raczowski has refused to stop.

"I would do away with all PACs," Borregard said. "I would favor a voluntary public financing program."

"I would be happier if all contributions came from individuals," Vagnozzi agreed. "I think the whole solution is public funding of campaigns, but without any additional funding."

Raczowski, on the other hand, sees nothing wrong with accepting PAC donations. He said he refused two which were sent while lawmakers were deciding an issue for which their organizations lobbied.

He believes most people belong to a "special interest group," whether it's a civic organization, a union or even the city of Farmington Hills.

"We have a lot of people in our community who are very active in these organizations and groups that want to see the right

thing happen in government, and support people that they believe truly do bring about positive changes," Raczowski said.

Since his first election committee was formed four years ago, Raczowski's PAC contribution list has grown significantly.

The first statement, filed with the Secretary of State before the 1996 primary election, showed \$6,850 from six PACs and nearly \$12,000 from 137 individual donors.

In a report from that year's general election campaign, the number of PAC contributors tripled, providing about half of the \$9,665 Raczowski's committee received. In a 2000 disclosure, which listed donations from December 1999 through January 2000, Raczowski reported only 10 contributions from individual donors, amounting to less than \$2,000, and 86 PAC donations, totaling about \$28,000.

PAC dollars also account for a lot of Raczowski's Leadership Fund, which also includes many individual contributions from outside the Farmington/Farmington Hills area he represents. Donors come from Bloomfield Hills, Novi, Rochester Hills, Troy, Royal Oak, Commerce Township, Brighton, Grosse Pointe, Lake Orion and Oak Park, among others.

"Let's be honest," he said. "A lot of people in our community and in southeast Michigan would love to see the Speaker of the House from the Farmington Hills area because they're sick and tired of riding over pothole covered roads. They're tired of their legislators ... working hard for them but not being able to change a tremendous amount."

A committee on which Raczowski serves decides which Republican candidates to sup-

port. He said people who contribute to the fund want to keep a Republican majority in the House. They contribute to his PAC because they don't know which candidates to support in other races.

Raczowski bluntly points out that neither of the challengers would have much political power. Borregard would be the lone Reform Party representative in the House; Vagnozzi would be a junior member of the minority party.

Breeding ground

Borregard believes people would be "horrified" if they spent time going through lists of PAC donations, which come from groups representing energy, telecommunications, health and other industries. Problems arise, he believes, when candidates speak out about issues after accepting special interest money.

As an example, Borregard points to a public service announcement by Raczowski and Rep. Nancy Cassis, R-Nowi, urging teens to stay away from alcohol.

At the same time, both have accepted donations from the liquor industry.

"One problem more than anything else with this whole PAC thing is that it breeds hypocrisy," Borregard said.

He said Raczowski's reliance

on special interest dollars in his campaign fund means people who vote for him are voting for those corporate interests.

"He's owned by the corporations," Borregard charged. "They pay him more money to sit there in Lansing than we do."

Raczowski bristles at the idea that he's "bought and paid for" and points out PACs are only individually driven because corporations are prohibited from contributing. The people who organize them make the decisions as to how their funds are spent, and they see him as a person who works hard and listens to what he has to say.

"You believe you can buy access to me, that's such a falsehood," he said. "I had a constituent almost three weeks ago, on a Saturday night, at 1:30, call me up regarding a power of attorney ... I've never received a campaign contribution from that individual, nor would I solicit one. I'm his employee, and that's how I treat this job."

Raczowski also notes the long and varied list of organizations on his campaign lists and said he has a record of voting for and against their interests.

When he first announced his candidacy, Vagnozzi sent a letter asking Raczowski to agree to a ban on PAC money and limit expenditures to \$25,000, as well

as file monthly reports. After formally announcing his candidacy, Raczowski indicated he would file reports as the law required, Vagnozzi said.

He admits his reason for filing public statements might be at least a little selfish.

"Part of the reason is, if people see how pathetic my finances are, they might contribute," he joked.

When Vagnozzi served on the Farmington Hills City Council and as mayor, he watched lobbyists from various special interests working the Capitol behind the scenes.

Charges and denials

He sees increasing willingness on the part of legislators to accept PAC donations.

Vagnozzi charges Raczowski used his Leadership PAC to support Republican candidates in some tight races, which helped

swing a Republican majority. Raczowski was then elected House majority leader.

But Raczowski flatly denies his contributions came with strings.

He also denies more recent contributions to more than a dozen political races have anything to do with his wanting to become Speaker of the House.

"If he can prove anything ... I'll resign tomorrow and stand outside on 10 (Mile Road) and Grand River in a chicken suit saying I was wrong," Raczowski said. "That's not the case, and for him to insinuate something like that is political garbage."

If Vagnozzi is truly opposed to PAC contributions, then he shouldn't accept any no matter what, Raczowski added. "If he's got a ban against PAC money, have a ban against PAC money," he said. "It's a political game."

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