

# Suggested questions for gubernatorial candidates

It's 17 months before the November 2002 election, yet Michigan politics are moving into full frenzy.

On the Democratic side, Attorney General Jennifer Granholm announced her candidacy for governor last week. Former Gov. Jim Blanchard has already bounded around the state on a "60 cities" tour and is scheduled formally to throw his hat into the ring next week. U.S. Rep. David Bonior has done nothing to curb the rumors he'll run for governor to save himself from defeat in a Republican-drawn new congressional district. And state Sens. Alma Wheeler Smith and Gary Peters are busily trying to shake the impression they're already buried by the bigger names.

For the GOP, the odds-on favorite for nomination, Lt. Gov. Dick Posthumus, is doggedly trying to curtail the growing impression among insiders that he lacks "trial" skills potential challengers — ranging from Sen. Joe Schwarz to Sen. Dan DeGrow — wonder whether they should hire staff and start raising money.

So the odds are better than ever that you'll come face to face with a real live candidate for governor over the next year or so. Here's another in a series of columns offering readers some questions to ask the candidates, this time concentrating on some serious good-government issues.

**Appointment Supreme Court Justices:** Last year's election for the state Supreme Court cost millions and millions of dollars, spent mostly in nasty TV commercials. Any pretense of judicial objectivity or restraint was lost in what amounted to an entirely partisan contest between Republican and Democratic views of justice. Most folks wound up believing the justice administered by the Supreme Court is the very best money and politics can buy.

Gov. John Engler, for one, wants to do away with the present silly system of electing Supreme Court justices. He wants to amend the state constitution to provide for appointment by the governor. I'd imagine I'd like to pick the justices if I were governor, but what do the candidates think? **\*Appointment Some University Boards:** Trustees for

the University of Michigan, Michigan State University and Wayne State, together with members of the state board of education, are elected statewide. Nobody knows who the candidates are, or what their qualifications are, or where they stand on the issues.

Gov. Engler, again, thinks this is silly. He proposes adding seven appointed members to the eight elected members of the big-time university boards. What do the wannabe governors say about this?

**Term Limits:** Since the adoption of term limits in 1992, turnover in the state House of Representatives has been near-total. Of the state Senate's 34 members, 27 will be term-limited out at the end of 2002.

Most thoughtful observers believe the House has lost experience and stability as a result of term limits, and the most optimistic comment I've heard about the post-term-limit Senate is, "Katy, bar the door!"

Six years in the House and eight years in the Senate is plainly too short a time for legislators to learn the ins and outs of policy and legislating. Some people think it's time to amend the state constitution to push term limits back to, say, 12 years. Do the candidates for governor support the idea?

**Part-time Legislature:** The Michigan legislature, now enjoying a 36-percent pay increase, meets most months of every year. With term limits demolishing experience and stability among our lawmakers, the odds are that the quality of legislative product will diminish, possibly seriously. With bad law the likely result of a term-limited legislature, why not make the legislature itself part-time, meeting for only a few months every other year?

Present and former governors alike warm to the idea of governing without members of the legislature constantly butting in. Would the candidates do this time around?

Have fun! And let me know what the candidates say.

*Phil Power is chairman of HomeTown Communications Network Inc., the company that owns this newspaper. He welcomes your comments, either by voice mail at (734) 953-2047, Ext. 1880, or by e-mail at ppower@homecomm.net*



Mike Malott

# Lawmakers need not align religion and science

The year is 2099. Your great-grandson has just been diagnosed with lung cancer. Doctors could cure him now. Medical professionals have long since learned enough about genetics that they could easily extract a bit of DNA from his hair or fingernails and clone a new set of lungs for him. They could cultivate the replacement parts he needed in a petri dish from his own chromosomes.

But not in Michigan. A hundred years ago, state lawmakers outlawed human cloning. In 1998, four bills — sponsored by Reps. Kirk Proffitt, Michelle McManus, George Mans and Sen. Loren Bennett — flew through the legislature on votes of 92-11 in the House and 37-0 in the Senate. Gov. John Engler signed the bills, calling cloning "morally and ethically wrong."

To be sure, cloning posed legitimate ethical dilemmas then as it does now, but at the time little was known about what cloning was, what could be done with it, how it worked, or how it could be regulated. After all, the research had not yet been done.

Lawmakers simply banned it. And they specifically voted to make the ban permanent, rejecting an amendment to make it a moratorium.

The Legislature did put exemptions into law to allow for "other cell-based research," presumably to let scientists continue with their work in non-cloning areas of study, but the penalties were enough to strike terror in the hearts of geneticists. If researchers strayed into an area government officials considered to be human cloning, they could have faced a 10-year felony and a \$10 million fine. Armed robbery then would get you five years in jail, but banned science could get you 10 and a lifetime of financial ruin.

Just three years later, Rep. Robert Gosselin led the Legislature's second intrusion into genetic science when he proposed that the theory of "Intelligent Design" be taught in science classrooms alongside evolution. He admitted that Intelligent Design is a religious concept, not provable or disprovable by scientific methodology, but Gosselin still insisted it be taught alongside observation and physical evidence in science courses.

It's interesting to note that this turn of events came the year after the Human Genome Project cracked the genetic code and piled up tons of fresh evidence about how and why random mutations in genetic material drive the evolutionary process. It was also the very same year that Gov. Engler

began his efforts to create a Life Sciences Corridor in Michigan, based on the genetic research going on in Ann Arbor, East Lansing and Grand Rapids. Just as emerging computer technology had spurred hot beds of economic activity in California's Silicon Valley, Engler envisioned a new industry including perhaps dozens of biotech firms springing up in Michigan as an off-shoot to emerging genetic technology.

Engler — who signed the ban on cloning and whose political party endorsed the teaching of Intelligent Design in science classes — never understood why his Life Sciences Corridor failed to materialize.

He never understood that genetic researchers were staying away in droves out of fear of what the Legislature might do next. Nor did he recognize that geneticists were quietly packing their bags in the hopes of escaping the state before they were jailed or fined into bankruptcy.

Engler also never figured out why Michigan students found it so hard after that to gain admission to health care and genetic research programs in colleges elsewhere in the country.

What Gosselin and Engler didn't understand was that most Christians were already capable of believing that religion and science address two very different aspects of reality. Science and technology may make planes fly, bridges stand, computers operate or cure deadly diseases, but religion can give life meaning.

There was no need for lawmakers to try to clarify reality for them. There was no need for lawmakers to try to align the two schools of thought. Michigan residents, Christian or not, had already worked it out for themselves.

Back in the 18th century, drafters of our Constitution understood that when religion and politics mix, bad things happen. Too bad that at the dawn of the 21st century, Michigan lawmakers hadn't yet realized that when religion and science mix, good things fail to happen.

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Phil Power

among insiders that he lacks "trial" skills potential challengers — ranging from Sen. Joe Schwarz to Sen. Dan DeGrow — wonder whether they should hire staff and start raising money.

## LETTERS

### No excuse for speed

Recently, I was taking my everyday walk home from the bus stop at 2:30 p.m. I passed the 25-mph speed limit sign and approached my street. My neighbor and I were walking near the curb. Right as he got his mail and we started for his driveway, a black Explorer came speeding by us. There was no honk, or even any warning of approaching danger.

During my childhood years, my neighborhood has always been a safe place. I have always been told to look both ways before I cross the street. I

have gone through Safety Town and soon will be going to driver's training. I am aware that all drivers must drive slowly in neighborhoods, especially for children's safety. By speeding, the driver endangered everyone walking on the road. Furthermore, he or she should have been watching for young children unaware to look before crossing the street. If a police officer were present, the driver would have been fined. There should be no excuse for reckless driving and in no way should it be tolerated.

*Dana Nucitelli  
Power Middle School*

Today, Somerset. Tomorrow, Vogue.



Catch your Senior Classmates in our Prom fashion Show on April 7th. Wanna be a hit at your prom this year? Then hit Somerset Collection for our Prom fashion Show on Saturday, April 7th, at 2:00 p.m., at Somerset South. Seniors from local area high schools will be modeling what's hot and hip in dresses, luxes and accessories. So take your style to the head of the class! To be in vogue on prom night, be at Somerset this Saturday.

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