Dems' Fink sets sights on Knollenberg's congressional seat

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U.S. Rep. Joe Knollenberg is
undoubtedly a decent person,
according to West Bloomfield
attorn e y



n e y
David
Fink.

"But
does he
represent the
interests of
Oak.
land
County
voters
as he
should?"

Fink, the first Democrat to file Statement of Candidacy papers with the Federal Election Com-

with the Federal Election Commission, a prerequisite for raising or spending money in a campaign for a congressional race. Fink is expected to announce his candidacy next month, and other Democrats may challenge him for the party's nomination. But he is considering a bid against Knollenberg in the recently redistricted 9th Congressional District that includes Birmingham, Bloomfield Township, Rochester Hills, Troy and portions of Orion and Waterford

townships.

Boundaries of the new district Boundaries of the new district are being challenged in court. But as drawn by the Republican-controlled state legislature, the new 9th District includes areas

controlled state legislature, the new 8th District includes areas currently represented by Democratic U.S. Reps. Sander Levin and Dale E. Kildee.

"I really don't know if I can beat him (Knollenberg)," said Fink. But I'm going to find out."

Knollenberg was in the district this week but unavailable for comment. Chief of staff Paul F. Welday, however, said Knollenberg, 87, who has yet to announce, is prepared to run against any Democrat — or Republican, for that matter — on his record.

That Knollenberg lost some of his old political base because of redistricting is encouraging to some Democrats, who expect the party to be stronger in the 2002 off-year election. A qualified, well-financed Democrat, they say, could have a fighting chance — even against an entrenched incumbent like Knollenberg, a party activist in Farmington Hills. "Ho's bright and articulate, but he has relatively little name recognition."

Robert D. Nicholson, chair of

recognition."

Robert D. Nicholson, chair of the Birmingham, Bloomfield

Democratic Club, said his party will have something else in its favor next year. "People are still upset about that last (presiden-tial) election," he said, "and (President) Bush's policies have been horrible."

Don Quixote?

Don Quixote?

Another Birmingham resident, however, thinks Knollenberg will be too strong in 2002. "He (Knollenberg) has done a good job." said Mary Montgomery, a precinct delegate. "He won't be beaten by any liberal . . . which is another word for socialist."

"Dave Fink," mused GOP County Chair L. Brooke Patterson. "is he the guy who just legally changed his name from Don Quixote?"

Knollenberg will be re-elected by an overwhelming margin, predicted Patterson, who is also Oakland County executive, "because he's done an outstanding job."

Flink, 48, has never run for public office, although he has been active politically. "I worked for Carl Levin's election when I was 11 years old," he said, and I've been active in the community." In 1997, for example, he was

appointed to a blue ribbon com-mittee on school finance by the Bloomfield Hills Board of Educa-

mittee on school linance by the Bloomfield Hills Board of Education.

He was the Oakland coordinator for People Who Care About Kids, the organization that earlier this year conducted a petition drive calling for a statewide referendum on the state's new law on obtaining permits to carry concealed weapons. Fink and other opponents insist the new law makes it too easy to obtain permits and to carry concealed weapons.

"I was horrified when the lame-duck legislature pushed that law through at the 11th hour," Fink said. The drive obtained more than 300,000 signatures, but the Michigan Supreme Court ruled the new law could not be subject to referendum.

Many Oakland voters oppose

endum.

Many Onkland voters oppose
the state's new gun permit law,
said Fink, including some prominent Republicans.
Another factor that appears to
favor Fink is his ability to raise
money. He has previously been a
successful fund-raiser for other
candidates, and he is exceted to candidates, and he is expected to have strong financial support for his own campaign.
"In previous elections, Knol

lenberg has significantly out-spent his opponents," said Fink,



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who declined to speculate about how much money he will spend. "The congressm the control of the congressm that won't be outspent as badly as his other opponents."

He undoubtedly has some things in common with Knollenberg, said Fink. "I think we're both decent people," he said, and we're both fiscal conservatives."

McCain-Feingold. The congressm called Second would be seen the seam of the rights, or the rams, said Welds and other gun and proud of it." Fink expects to the came the cam

Differences

Differences
But as the campaign unfolds,
Fink said he intends to focus on
issues that underscore their
differences. "I'm definitely prochoice," he said, "and I'm strongly in favor of campaign finance
reform, such as McCain-Feingold."
He also supports "reasonable"

gold."

He also supports "reasonable" gun control measures, Fink said, such as closing the so-called gun-show loophole in existing law. That loophole, he said enables a person to circumvent the background check normally required for purchasing a pistol by buying them at gun shows. Asked about Knollenberg's voting record, Welday said his boss supports some form of cam-

McCain-Feingold.

"The congressman supports so-called Second Amendment rights, or the right to bear arms," said Welday, "but he also advocates the use of trigger locks, and other gun safety measures."

"He's pro-life," said Welday, and proud of it.

Fink expects to get an early start on the campaign, with a heavy emphasis on people-to-people contact. I expect to speak directly with a lot of voters," he said.

Fink, a 1970 graduate of Oak Park High School, attended Harvard University and graduated magna cum laude in 1974. He graduated cum laude from Harvard Law School in 1977.

His first law practice was out of a small, one-desk office in Detroit, which he shared with former State Sen. Daniel Cooper. That practice evolved into Fink, Zausmer & Kaufman, P.C., in Farmington Hills which has 19 attorneys.

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Fink and wife Trudy have two children, Nathan, 15, who attends Andover High School, and Lauren, 13, a student at West Hills Middle School.



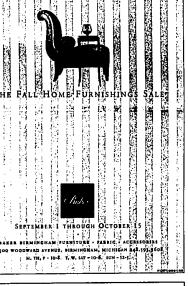


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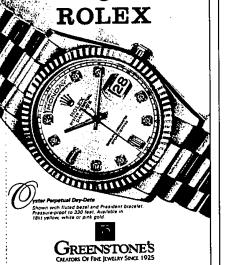
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