

Expense code stirs conflict

By APRIL KORNMEIER

Are school board candidates and special millage committees required to file campaign expense reports after school elections?

The answer may vary from a definite "yes" to an unequivocal "no" depending on whom you're talking to at the county or state level.

"No," answered Director of Elections Howard Altman of the Oakland County clerk's office, which is charged with canvassing local school board elections.

"Yes," said his boss, Oakland County Clerk Lynn D. Allen in an interview last week.

"No," said elections specialist Tom Bradford of the secretary of state's election division while Assistant Attorney General John Pirich said, "Yes," just as emphatically.

THE CONFLICT arises around the interpretation of the state general election code.

That code defines public offices which require campaign disclosure as "national, state, county, city, village or township office."

A local school election code makes no mention of campaign disclosure, but also states the state general election code should apply where the school code is lacking.

Attorney General Pirich views the school boards as "state entities" covered by the general election law.

Violation of the law can be prosecuted as a misdemeanor, he said.

THE CODE requires disclosure of campaign expenses 10 days after the primary and 20 days after the general election.

The local Oakland County elections' head disagreed.

"The school board, through a deficiency in the law, is not required to file," he said in an interview Friday.

"I'll agree with the secretary of state's office and what the law

says to me before I accept the opinion of an assistant attorney general," he said.

Regardless of what the law stipulates, the usual practice by school boards and local county clerks had been to release school board candidates from any possible disclosure requirements.

CRIG RUFF, special assistant to the governor, said the governor's campaign finance disclosure bill, now being reviewed in an amended form by the Senate, would include all elected officials except precinct delegates.

County clerk Allen also has reversed his stand and now agrees with his subordinate Altman that disclosure is not required.

Asked how the question of financial disclosure in school elections could still be cloudy after years of elections, he answered:

"People normally don't follow these elections that closely. If school board was a (highly) paid position, you'd find more hassle for it (disclosure)."

His office only began canvassing school board elections last year, he added.

MEANWHILE, school board candidates filling the clerk's office have been just as confused as he was.

West Bloomfield Schools board of education candidate Judith Miller, 3388 Old Pond Way, insists she was advised by a woman at the county clerk's office that she was required to file.

Altman also said two Ferndale School District candidates had taken out disclosure forms, saying they were doing so upon the advice of the school attorney.

By Tuesday afternoon, two school board candidates from Southfield, one from the West Bloomfield District, and one from the Pontiac school system had filed expense reports with the county clerk's office.

Mrs. Straus running for 17th nomination

Kathleen Straus of Detroit has announced her candidacy for the 17th District Democratic Congressional nomination.

Mrs. Straus, 50, pledges to help bring about "an era of action, leadership, and accomplishment" in Congress.

She was born in New York and graduated from Hunter College in 1944. Mrs. Straus has a degree in economics and attended graduate school at American University.

She was an economic analyst for the U.S. Treasury Department, deputy director of the mayor's committee for community renewal and the Detroit Model Cities program and director of the Social Services Division and Southeast Michigan Council of Governments. She has also been active in the Detroit and Michigan League of Women Voters.

MRS. STRAUS pointed to the "failure of Congress to deal effectively with inflation, unemployment, and political scandal as the reason why people are frustrated by the events in Washington."

"For too long," she said, "Congress has been a place where crisis follows crisis. Thoughtful planning for the future has been replaced by a continuous search for excuses and apologies."

"Today, the need for America to meet its challenges is greater than at any time in this century and perhaps in our history. Not only must we find solutions to our economic and social problems, we must also rededicate ourselves to the principles and ideals that this country was founded upon two

hundred years ago."

"When given results instead of excuses, I am certain that the people of this country will once again have faith in and respect for this system that has endured for so long."

Mrs. Straus added that she could help bring about the important changes needed in the Congressional process because of her understanding of "what people expect from government" and her experience.

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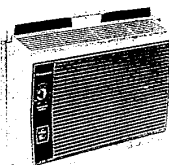
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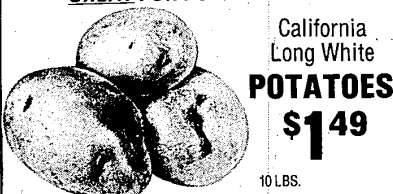
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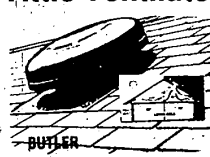
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