

Hand lauds judicial reform plan, is pessimistic

By MARTHA MAHAN

A proposal to reform judicial campaign financing is "high minded" but it will "never get off the ground," the opinion of Judge Michael J. Hand, Judge Hand, whose 47th district court covers Farmington and Farmington Hills, is a member of the ad hoc committee headed by Wayne County Circuit Judge Victor J. Baum, which drew up the program.

"It flies in the face of human nature," declared Judge Hand, who also serves as president of the Michigan District Judges Association.

The proposal is intended to help generate public confidence in the courts by withholding from judicial candidates the sources and amounts contributed to their political campaigns by lawyers.

Public confidence is not enhanced by campaign practices that allow judicial candidates to solicit and receive financial contributions from lawyers who practice in the very courts to which the candidates seek election or

rejection," Judge Baum said in a statement.

The proposal, dubbed the FAIR plan, would establish trusts, administered by bar associations, to which lawyers could contribute. What lawyer contributed how much to which judicial candidate would be kept secret.

Names of lawyers channeling contributions through the trust fund could be disclosed but not the amount of the contribution nor the candidates to whom they had directed the money.

The trusts would distribute the lawyer campaign contributions without disclosing their source.

All lawyers and judicial candidates participating in the FAIR plan would be required to make a written pledge of full adherence to its provisions.

Participating attorneys would be required to make a written pledge not to disclose to anyone, other than administrators of the plan, the amount of their contribution or the identity of any candidate for whom they designated their contribution.

While he agrees that the present system should be revised, Judge Hand feels the FAIR Plan won't work unless it is "broadened and made applicable to all contributors."

Bigger localities, such as Detroit, Pontiac and Mt. Clemens, have so many judges and lawyers that it is "pretty difficult for one lawyer or group of lawyers to be able to exercise undue influence," Judge Hand also said.

"When you think of 38 Wayne County circuit judges and some 30 district judges in Oakland County, it's hard to see how much influence could be brought to bear," he said.

"Where you run into trouble is with labor unions and trade associations and organizations like that, and I can't see them contributing under this plan."

"And there is no question some judges get contributions from labor unions and some from corporations."

"Unless the plan is broadened and made applicable to all contributors, I fear it will never get off the ground. It is high minded and theoretical, but the aim won't be accomplished because they won't get enough money."

Judicial candidates participating in the plan would be required to make a written pledge to refuse any financial contributions from lawyers except through the plan.

Incumbent judges further would be required to make a written pledge to refrain from soliciting from lawyers any campaign assistance of any kind. They also would be required to make the same pledge to forbid court employees or staff from soliciting or receiving campaign assistance.

Neither lawyers nor judges would be required to participate in the plan. However, Judge Hand said he thought "those interested" ultimately hope to make it mandatory either through the Bar or the Supreme Court so that the plan would be "not just policy but mandatory."

"It's a good plan and there's no question it would remove a lot of undue influence," Judge Hand commented, "but I don't think it's going to work. They won't get enough contributors."

"If a person is going to give money to a campaign, it's only practical for him to designate the judge he wants the money to go to."

"To ask him to sign a pledge not to reveal he has made such a contribution flies in the face of human nature."

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ASK ABOUT OUR HAVE A BALL PROGRAM

Oppenheimer wants referendum and asks council for suggestions

By STEVE BARNABY

At the suggestion of Mayor Earl Oppenheimer, the Farmington Hills City Council will be considering issues to put on a possible advisory referendum for the Nov. 4 election.

Because of the increased cost in running the city, and the number of decisions that need to be considered, Oppenheimer said at this week's council meeting, Hills voters should be heard on how they feel about the issues.

In economic times such as these, it is difficult to determine what the people in the community want to do. For one, don't feel we should listen to just a few people in determining the expenditure of the tax dollar," he said.

Among the issues Oppenheimer would like to see put on an advisory referendum are a fulltime fire department, development of a park system, road paving and development of a recreational program. He has asked that other councilmen come up with additional ideas by the next council session.

Such a referendum, said Oppenheimer, would allow a full "democratic" discussion on the pros and cons of the issues and, at the same time, give the council direction on how it should act in the future.

This is especially critical, Oppenheimer feels, because of eventual increases in the tax rate which, by charter stipulation, will have to be made. The council has maintained city millage at six mills this year rather than raising it to seven, as allowed by charter.

Although in favor of considering referendum ideas, Councilman Fred Lichtman warned that wording of the ballot would have to be such that voters don't get the idea they are giving the

council a mandate on the issues presented.

"I am afraid that the people would interpret the referendum as a vote to approve. If we do that we may not get a true indication of how the voters feel about the issues."

Also, the council should be the sole judge of what referendums are put on the ballot so we can avoid submissions by special interest groups," said Lichtman.

City Clerk Floyd Cairns informed the council that suggestions would have to be submitted by September 12 to make the Nov. 4 ballot. The extra cost, he said, would be minimal in conducting the election. Extra absentee ballots and voting strips for the machines would have to be printed.

Besides determining what questions shall be on the ballot, the council has asked the city administration to determine the cost of each one proposal so

that voters get an idea of what kind of taxes they will be paying.

"I'm not sure how the people will react to the issues we put on the ballot, but at least we will have full discussion," said Oppenheimer.

The four issues mentioned by Oppenheimer have recently surfaced during the city council campaign election. Up for reelection are Oppenheimer, William Ortman, Jan Dolan and Keith Deacon.

Candystripers given awards

Six Farmington women were honored at the annual candystriper awards program Aug. 13 at Providence Hospital, Southfield.

Silver bracelet charm was given to Lori Lilly of Farmington who volunteered more than 500 hours of her time.

Candystripers are 15 to 18-year-old volunteers. On nursing units, their primary emphasis is on patient service. They answer requests for such items as extra blankets or drinking water.

They also transport patients in wheelchairs, deliver and arrange flowers and fulfill special requests (i.e., writing letters and combing hair).

RECEIVING A CAP for 10 hours were Kathleen Gorman of 23270 Cass, Pat Kelly of 23231 Cass, Pauline Paroki of 25331 Wellington and Debbie Tartaglia of 25807 Branchville.

Judy Hoffenblum of 24555 Perrow Drive was awarded a certificate for 100 hours and Lori Lilly of 25336 Cass-Tereigh was given a second stripe for donating more than 500 hours.

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