

# Presidential primary altered

By TIM RICHARD

State Rep. Sal Rocca (D-Sterling Heights), whose district includes southeast Troy, said the new system will work against the interests of growing suburbs with high voter turnouts.

But Aldo Vagnozzi, a high Democrat

official from Farmington Hills, said much of the criticism of the bill is "unwarranted."

Rocca was among the minority when the House voted 52-38 approval. All other area representatives favored it.

When the bill passed the Senate 22-6, State Sen. Bill S. Huffman (D-Madison Heights), whose district also includes part of Troy, supported it. State Sen. Daniel Cooper (D-Oak Park) and Donald Bishop (R-Rochester) were absent and excused for that session.

ROCCA SAID suburban congressional districts—such as the 18th and 12th—have growing populations and high voter turnouts. "Instead of having the average of 400,000 or so persons, these districts have 500,000 or 600,000 while districts like the first and 13th in Detroit may have only 350,000."

"A delegate from Detroit may represent 8,000 or 9,000 voters. A suburban delegate may represent 12,000 votes," Rocca said.

The reasoning works like this: National convention delegates are apportioned to congressional districts in large part on the basis of the party vote in the 1972 general election. On a percentage, the first and 13th districts had relatively good turnouts compared to the suburbs.

Michigan voters will go to the polls in May to reveal their presidential preferences in party primaries. The first and 13th districts will have poor turnouts compared to the suburbs—unless, as Vagnozzi says, a candidate who excites black voters turns up. Thus, say the critics, the formula for apportioning delegates is based on an election with a far different voter turnout from the 1972 presidential primary.

Some critics see this as a blow to Alabama Gov. George Wallace. Rocca prefers to phrase it in Detroit vs. suburbs terms.

VAGNOZZI CONTENDS, however, that "at this time, you can't tell whether it helps or hurts Wallace."

Allocation of delegates, Vagnozzi says, is based on a formula. One large part is the party vote for president in the previous election. Another part of the formula is the number of paid-up Democratic Party memberships in a congressional district 60 days before the primary.

Three-fourths of Michigan's 133 Democratic National Convention delegates will be apportioned to the 19 congressional districts on the basis of the formula, he said. The other one-fourth will be picked by the Democratic State Central Committee.

Delegates within a congressional district will be elected in a district caucus. Persons pledged to candidates

will be elected in proportion to the district's vote in the May primary. Vagnozzi acknowledges there may be a "slight deviation" from a candidate's delegate strength compared to the statewide vote.

THERE ARE OTHER changes in the act, Vagnozzi says.

One is that precinct delegates may, at the party's option, be elected in the August state primary rather than during the May presidential primary.

Thus, the persons attending the congressional district caucuses to pick national convention delegates will be the precinct delegates elected in 1974, the previous state primary, not delegates elected in May 1976.

This switch allows Michigan Democrats to go back to the pre-1972 system of picking national convention delegates with precinct delegates who have been in office two years rather than with "fresh" delegates. Democrats are now going back to a system they had much criticized.

Another change, says Vagnozzi, is that a presidential candidate will be allotted convention delegates from Michigan if he wins 15 per cent of a district's vote. Previously, a candidate had to have five per cent of the statewide vote. "This will make it easier for 'regional' candidates," he says.

Many changes in the law were generated by changes in national party rules.

REPUBLICAN changes have stirred virtually no controversy.

A national Republican rule that the new law implements allows two-thirds of the national convention delegates to be picked in district caucuses and one-third statewide.

State Republican rules are that a candidate who polls 28 per cent of the May primary vote will get one of the three delegates allocated to each congressional district; a candidate receiving more than 28 per cent but less than 75 per cent will get two delegates; a candidate receiving more than 75 per cent will get all three district delegates.

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