

Taxpayers' feel pinch

Dems back elections to fill vacancies

By TIM RICHARD

Let's play a little quiz game. Which is a correct description of our two major political parties?
 a) Republicans favor appointing persons to county commissioner vacancies while Democrats favor elections.
 b) Democrats favor appointing persons to county commissioner vacancies while Republicans favor elections.
 If you answered a, you undoubtedly live in Oakland County, where Republicans favor appointments.
 If you answered b, you almost certainly live in Wayne County, where Democrats favor appointments.

THE OAKLAND County Board of Commissioners last week turned down a Republican proposal that the county pay the \$12,000 cost of a special county commission

er election that the Republicans didn't want to hold.

Meanwhile the losers are Farmington Hills and other southwestern Oakland cities and townships. They sought to have the county pay for the special election they conducted last spring in the 26th county commission district.

Said Dennis Murphy (R-Novi), who won that election: "We're establishing a precedent that isn't fair. It's really fair to force the district communities to pay the costs of an election they had no control over."

Added Lillian Moffitt (R-Bloomfield): "It took five months and \$12,000 to elect the person we (Republicans) wanted to appoint in the first place."

Concluded Patrick Nowak (R-Farmington Hills): "We (the county) are spending other people's money. That special election cost \$10 per vote cast."

WHAT HAPPENED last year was that Republican Commissioner Lew Coy resigned. Republicans in 1975 had a majority on the Oakland County board and wanted to appoint Coy's successor, who would have been Murphy.

Republicans said one of their own names, Mary Dearborn of Birmingham, gained up the process by refusing to go along with an appointment and Mrs. Dearborn didn't deny it.

Mrs. Dearborn, who switched her party affiliation to Democratic at the beginning of 1976, argued that "the best way to have elected officials is to elect them. The cost is relatively minor."

And so an election was held. And so the Republicans won the seat that had already been Republican, although the vote was close. And so the communists in the district sought to have the county pay the cost of the election—and they lost.

Supporting the GOP proposal were 13 commissioners—all Republicans. Opposing it were 12 commissioners—all Democrats. Two other Democrats were absent. It takes a majority of 14 to pass a proposal.

IN WAYNE COUNTY, however, the shoe was on the other foot. Democrats there have 24 to 26 of the 27 seats in any given year, and they would just as soon make appointments.

This irritates Republicans such as Commissioner Mary Dumas of Livonia and Democrats who aren't "in" with the undominated power structure.

Mrs. Dumas points out that nine of the current 27 board members got their jobs originally by appointment and says the board is growing apart from the people. The Democratic counter-argument is that their party is going to win anyway, so

why waste scarce county dollars on needless elections?

STATEWIDE, THERE'S no particular precedent for appointing or electing board members when a vacancy occurs.

The governor appoints a U.S. senator when a vacancy occurs, but a special election is held to fill the vacancy of a U.S. representative.

Vacancies in the Michigan Legislature are filled by special election the time being set by the governor.

A vacancy on Detroit's city council is filled at the next regular election. Because the city is so large, the cost of holding a special election for one council member would be prohibitive.

Birmingham and Livonia city councils make an appointment to fill a vacancy until the next annual election.

School boards and community college boards make appointments to fill vacancies until the next annual election. The governor makes appointments to fill Michigan Supreme Court vacancies, but the appointment is good only until the next regular election. Thus, in 1976 voters will elect one justice for a full eight-year term, one to fill out the remaining six years of a term, and a third to fill out the remaining two years of a term.

The governor makes appointments to fill vacancies on the state board of education and the governing boards of the three big universities. But an appointee there fills out the remainder of the term, even if it's 7½ years.

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Suburban veto on water rates gets county boost

Oakland County commissioners are unanimously in favor of legislative bills that would give suburban customers of Detroit's water system veto power over water rate increases.

The county board Thursday gave 250-0 assent to House Bills 5463 and 5465 originally proposed by State Rep. John

Bennett (D-Redford), a strong critic of the Detroit water and sewer department.

At present Detroit's water board has seven members—four from the city and three from the suburbs—all appointed by the mayor and subject to his removal at any time.

Bennett would expand the board to nine members, five appointed by the mayor and four by an "assembly of cities, townships and villages" which are customers.

The key is that the bill, if enacted, would require rate increases to be approved by a six water board members, thus giving the customer communities a veto.

Other provisions would require the water board bills to be audited annually by a state-approved auditor instead of every five years by a city-appointed auditor, require the board to hold hearings on rate increases at least 150 days (about five months) prior to the time any rate increase is to take effect, and allow one-third of the customer communities to petition circuit court for an injunction to stop a rate increase if it is passed in violation of the law.

In the "assembly of governments" which is to pick suburban water board members, a community would have one vote for every 10,000 persons in its population.

The bills, as revised were reported out of the house towns and counties committee after public hearings in Detroit and Livonia.

The median family income in Bloomfield Hills in 1969 was \$46,715. From 1916-1967, 237 tornadoes in Michigan caused 228 deaths, but from 1971-1975, 123 tornadoes caused only four deaths.

More than twice as many men as women over 25 years of age in Michigan have completed five or more years of college.

Commercial fishermen caught 16 million pounds of fish in the Great Lakes in 1975. These facts and many more are included in the 1976 edition of the "Michigan Statistical Abstract" published by the Michigan State University Graduate School of Business Administration.

Published every two years, the book has 1,042 pages filled with statistics about the state's social and economic conditions. It has 24 chapters on subjects ranging from education, population, housing, employment and health to mining, construction, communication and wholesale trade. Information is broken down by counties or cities.

David I. Verway, editor, says the publication is a valuable reference for libraries, businesses, editorial offices, schools and government offices.

Copies at \$8.75 are available from the Division of Research, Graduate School of Business Administration, Michigan State University, East Lansing, 48824. Checks should be made payable to Michigan State University.

County GOP courts young executives

Former Michigan Gov. George Romney and Oakland County Republicans are rolling out the red carpet for young executives seeking a voice in the political process.

County GOP Chairman Arthur G. Elzant announced that some 300 young business leaders have been invited to an evening of tennis, dinner, and politics to be held at 7 p.m. Wednesday at Square Lake Racquet Club in Bloomfield Hills.

Featured speakers for the event will be Gov. Romney and his wife Lenore, both of whom have long advocated citizen participation as the only effective solution to national and local problems.

Local arts funds available in fall

Michigan Council for the Arts, recently announced a change in the funding period for the community assistance program. The program grants up to \$1,000 for arts projects sponsored by nonprofit organizations. The new dates are Oct. 1, 1976 through Nov. 30, 1977.

E. Ray Scott, executive director, said the change was made to allow for increased arts activity at the end of the bi-centennial year, to make special activity easier to plan and implement, and to allow for continual activity during the year.

For assistance to begin or complete an arts-related project, contact Michigan Council for the Arts, 1200 South Ave., Detroit 48226 or call 256-3717.

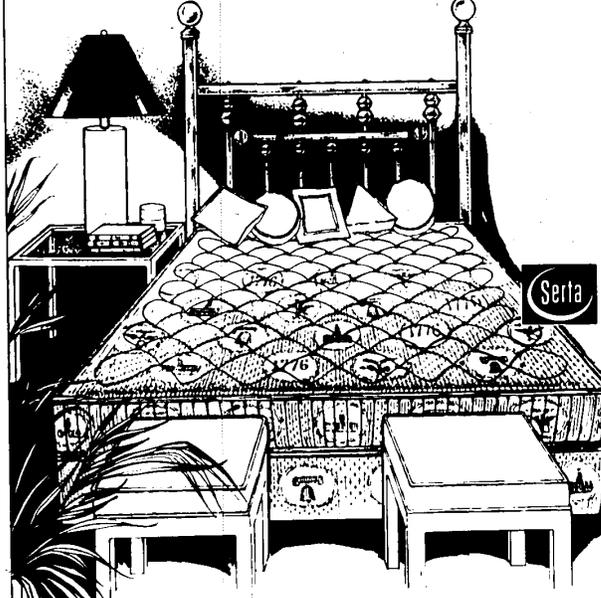
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Bicentennial packet available

Michigan residents can purchase an unusual bicentennial memento packet from the U.S. Postal Service.

The \$2 packet includes three full-color

prints 11 by 14 inches, suitable for framing, and a bicentennial souvenir sheet.

Included in the prints are a being letter from Benjamin Franklin to a member of the British Parliament and Patrick Henry's ringing "give me liberty or give me death" speech. Several historic stamp designs appear on the prints.

The six by eight-inch souvenir sheet reproduced John Trumbull's famous painting "The Declaration of Independence" and bears five 1-cent stamps and a half-cent cancellation from Philadelphia dated July 4, 1976.

Mail orders may be placed by sending \$2 to Bicentennial Prints, P.O. Box 764, Washington, D.C. 20004. For an additional \$1, a plastic passport may be purchased to collect stamps at historic sites throughout the country. This offer is limited.

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