

Brickley vs. Headlee and Patterson on taxes

By Tim Richard
staff writer

James Brickley, Richard Headlee and L. Brooks Patterson agreed on one thing: One of them would be a better governor than the UAW-endorsed James Blanchard of any of the other Democratic candidates.

After that, however, the three top contenders for the Republican gubernatorial nomination split on nearly all 15 questions asked Tuesday by the 300 members of the Bloomfield Republican Women's Club.

In general, Brickley found himself defending Milliken administration policies while Headlee and Patterson took a more conservative tack, attacking taxes and spending.

State Sen. Jack Welborn, R-Kalamazoo, the fourth contender for the Republican gubernatorial nomination, did not attend.

Here is a sampling of questions and the candidates' answers in the order in which they spoke:

WHAT SPECIFIC proposals would you make to increase the number of jobs in Michigan?

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Brickley, 55, lieutenant governor from 1971-74 and 79-82: "First, change the philosophy of the Michigan Legislature of the last 10 years, a philosophy which has systematically eroded jobs... which has not been concerned about the job climate. Second, diversify the economy. High technology is the most obvious area."

Headlee, 51, president of Alexander Hamilton Life Insurance Co. of Farmington Hills and chairman of the board of Oakland University: "Make businesspeople who are here feel welcome... Revise the single business tax to put in a profit floor... Get in advocate in the governor's office for private enterprise. Business and jobs are synonymous. If you're anti-business, you're anti-jobs."

Patterson, 44, prosecutor of Oakland County for 10 years: "I own a small restaurant in north Oakland County that employs 15. Every Friday we have to meet a payroll after workers comp, unemployment comp, single business tax, franchise fee and now more income tax. The costs of doing business in Michigan are prohibitive. I would repeal the single business tax — not modify it like my two friends here."

DO YOU AGREE with the package of tax increases and spending cuts advocated by Gov. Milliken?
Headlee: "Lower taxes and more jobs, not higher taxes and no jobs. Say 'no' to the big spending lobbies. The package contains no true spending cuts."

Patterson: "No question there's a fiscal crisis. I was poo-pooed by the Department of Management and Budget for saying that in February... Freeze state hiring and attrition out 11,000 jobs (minus 2,700 critical jobs such as prison guards). Eliminate welfare fraud. Ten years ago, I wrote a book proposing 53 ways to stop welfare fraud. The legislature ignored it."

Brickley: "I'm doing a lot of economic

development work — talking to business leaders in high-technology, robotics, molecular biology. Not one of them raised a serious question about taxes in Michigan... It's that (increase the income tax) or watch us slip below a tolerable level of services in this state."

POTHOLE JOKES are no joke. What would you do about our deteriorating roads?
Headlee: "The gas tax has been a major source of revenue. The state is not managing your money well. There are 200 freeway design engineers in the Michigan Department of Transportation who haven't designed a freeway since the mid-'60s." Headlee frequently said "management" was the key to holding down spending and improving services.

Patterson: "We were told to conserve gas, and we did. The thank-you we get is a proposed one percent income tax hike. If you think it's 'temporary,' then you believe in the tooth fairy... Freeze wages... There's plenty left in the coffers for road maintenance."

Brickley: "This is how you tell who's in government and who's out. (Referring to Headlee's "management"

plank.) 75 to 80 percent of our highway money goes to private contractors in the private sector. We've got to tell the truth. We need more revenue. Al Quie, a Reagan Republican, ran for governor of Minnesota and said 'better management.' He said he wouldn't run again if taxes had to be increased. Within 12 months he had a \$1 billion deficit. A tax increase was passed. He is not running again."

HOW DO you feel about the proposed Woodward corridor subway?
Patterson: "Absolutely not. Unnecessary. It would squander taxpayers dollars. It would go nowhere and carry no one."

Brickley: "I don't think there's enough money to build it. But this region does need some fixed rail, or urban sprawl will kill us. We are the only metropolitan area in the nation trying to do it all with autos. I was surprised at SEMTA's subway recommendation. But I doubt we have the funds."

Headlee: "The subway is an ego trip for the mayor of one of the worst-managed cities in the world. Mayor Young says, 'Headlee is dead!' That's worth 200,000 votes for me in other parts of the state. Detroit is a classic example of what happens to a city whose bonds mature its mayor. The \$15 million

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