

Hoping to get it Dunn

Builder seeks GOP nomination for U.S. Senate

By Kathy Parrish
staff writer

Someone else now represents Michigan's 6th Congressional District, but the former officeholder still calls himself "Congressman Jim Dunn."

After all, Dunn only intends to be out of national office a short time.

Dunn, who lost his House seat a year ago after his area was redistricted, wants to go back to Washington — badly.

And the East Lansing builder is traveling around the state giving Republican Party officials "good, solid economic reasons" to pit him against Democrat U.S. Sen. Carl Levin, in November.

"If you read any quotes about Jim Dunn, they're about economic issues," explained the candidate, who already has the backing of former national committeeman Peter Fletcher and some other prominent Michigan Republicans.

"I ran on economic issues. And I know those are gonna be the issues of 1984."

DESCRIBING HIMSELF as a "Michigan conservative businessman," Dunn offers years of entrepreneurial skill as proof.

The 1961 Birmingham Seaholm graduate worked his way through Michigan State University painting houses. While earning a business administration degree, Dunn put college friends to work at his Jim's Painting and Decorating Service.

After 1967 graduation, the former Southfield resident sold real estate in East Lansing for six months.

Then he went from bank to bank until he found one willing to back Jim Dunn Builder. Today, Dunn and Fairmont Inc. build houses, condominiums and apartments in the campus town.

"What guts? What did I have to lose?" says the 40-year-old Dunn with a laugh when asked about the youthful business venture he started with wife Gayle, who has a degree in interior design.

"Too many people don't realize it's still possible to live the American dream if you're willing to go an extra 5 percent."

"I'm a much bigger believer in people than most people."

THAT BELIEF in individual effort leads to his criticism of Levin, who Dunn contends thinks "Washington should do it."

"Levin is pro bureaucracy. I don't think he represents us."

The businessman's concern over increased government spending and taxation led him to run for the U.S. Congress in 1980. He saw the Washington bureaucracy as increasingly interfering in a builder's life without knowing what it was doing. He won a surprising upset over Democratic incumbent Bob Carr.

When Democratic Pontiac became part of his district and Republican Jackson was removed,

however, Dunn's conservative businessman record cost him the seat.

"I lost 10-1 in Pontiac," explained the Republican Senate hopeful, who said the area's high unemployment worked against him.

"They didn't know anything about Carr except he's Democrat."

After just two years in office, Dunn is eager to return to Washington to two years in office, Dunn is eager to return to Washington to work for things he believes in — such as lower federal taxes and a constitutional amendment to balance the budget.

A supporter of the Grenada invasion, he approves of U.S. involvement in Lebanon but only as a peacekeeping mission — not as combat troops. He's also for capital punishment and a defense buildup in Europe.

The builder also supported social service cuts, which he said saved taxpayers billions of dollars by "targeting" such services as food stamps.

"We were covering people double. No one was thrown out on the street."

WHILE SOME Republicans accuse him of not supporting the president enough, Dunn firmly disagrees.

On economic issues, he believes Reagan is "generally correct."

"The overwhelming needs and desires of the people of Michigan are those economic issues. And I've been with Ronald Reagan on those issues, and people know that."

Now touring the state to raise campaign funds which will assure his candidacy, Dunn is unhappy that astronaut Jack Louma is being courted by some party officials. The Michigan native lived in Texas, moving his voting residence to Ann Arbor Township earlier this month.

"One of his big obstacles is that problems are



Jim Dunn
economy is issue

very different here than in Texas. I don't think it's fair or right to come in at the 11th hour," Dunn said.

But the former congressman has challenged Louma to debate at the state Republican convention Jan. 27 and 28 in Grand Rapids. "I'm seeking the endorsement, support of every single person who lives in Michigan," he said.

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