

Lewand as Dem chair? 'I've heard rumors'

By Tim Richard
staff writer

He has to think about it soon, but running for Democratic state chairman wasn't high on F. Thomas Lewand's agenda last week.

"I have not set up a campaign. I haven't made a decision. I'm giving it some thought. I've heard the rumors," Lewand said in an interview from his car phone late one evening.

"I'm not campaigning yet. I'd have to talk to a lot of people in the party," said the 42-year-old Oakland County attorney and confidant of

Gov. James J. Blanchard.

POLITICAL COLUMNISTS in Lansing say Blanchard is boosting Lewand for the post, almost assuring his election at next month's Democratic State Convention.

Lewand was close to then-U.S. Rep. Blanchard in the 1970s. Then a Royal Oak resident, Lewand won his first and only election victory for the county Board of Commissioners in 1978. Two years later he was the party's challenger to County Executive Dan Murphy.

Lewand managed Blanchard's 1982 campaign for governor, presid-

ed over the transitional team and was the governor's chief of staff for the first year.

"I took a year's leave of absence from my law firm. After a year, I had to review my commitments," Lewand said.

"We accomplished a lot in that year and got the right people in place. Then I decided to go back to my law firm."

SINCE THEN he has become busier and busier as an attorney, currently heading the public finance department for the Detroit-based law

firm of Jaffe, Salder, Raitt & Heuer. He has maintained close contact with the governor, handling Blanchard's divorce in the last year.

"I moved to Lansing for a few years because we had an office in Lansing," Lewand said.

He now lives in Bloomfield Township near Telegraph Road — an hour from Lansing, a half-hour from downtown Detroit.

That has political significance. While outgoing state Democratic Chairman Rick Wiener has been full time, others see the possibility

Lewand could be a part-time chairman.

There is a precedent. The Republicans have done that in past years, hiring a professional as executive director.

A GRADUATE of the University of Detroit and the Wayne State University Law School, Lewand was the Democratic nominee this year for still another institution — the University of Michigan Board of Regents.

Voters stuck with the incumbents — one from each party — and Lewand lost.



F. Thomas Lewand



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