Area incumbents smile

Legislative redistricting favors status quo

By Wayne Peal
staff writer

Don't expect county Republicans or Democrats to quarrel over new legislative districts.

Despite minor changes, new state House districts leave both parties' incumbents well suited for this year's campaigns. That's good news for the status quo — bad news for potential challengers.

Districts were revised last week by a Michigan Supreme Court-appointed panel. County party leaders said they were more than happy with the panel's work.

"I'm satisfied that Democrats will be fairly represented, and it looks like a larger number of Oakland County citizens will be represented by Democrats," county Democratic party leader Donald Tucker said.

Republican leaders are also pleased, even though the plan divides GOP strongholds Troy and Rochester Hills into two separate House districts each.

"WE WOULD have liked to have seen both cities stay together, but overall we're pretty happy," Oakland GOP executive director Jim LaVallee said.

Creation of an open House district, including Rochester, northeast Rochester Hills and Oakland Township, "appears to give us one more seat," LaVallee said.

An expected challenge by minority representatives could bring additional district changes statewide. Republicans, however, believe there will be little change to suburban Oakland's GOP-dominated districts.

New House districts take effect for this year's elections.

The hottest area race could take place in the open district, the new 45th, which also includes Addison, Orion and Oxford townships.

There is speculation Rep. Thomas Middleton, R-Brandon Township, could move into the district to avoid a showdown with fellow GOP incumbent Willis Bullard of Highland Township. But LaVallee said it's just as likely to remain without an incumbent.

Assuming all area incumbents decide to seek another term, here's how they stand as the election season begins:

- Maxine Berman, D-Southfield — A House member since 1983, Berman will see her Southfield/Lathrup Village remain intact under the panel's plan. She could be the area incumbent most vulnerable to further revisions if the minority appeal is accepted.
- Barbara Dobb, R-Commerce Township — A newcomer, Dobb retains the balance of her Commerce/West Bloomfield-based district. The district gains Keego Harbor and loses Walled Lake and Wixom.
- Jan Dolan, R-Farmington Hills — Farmington and Farmington Hills will be the district for Dolan, a second-term incumbent. The district loses the Southfield Township communities: Beverly Hills, Bingham Farms and Franklin.
- John Jamian, R-Bloomfield Township — Another newcomer, Jamian will see his district retain its Birmingham-Bloomfield base. The district picks up the three Southfield Township communities formerly represented by Dolan and loses Auburn Hills.
- Shirley Johnson, R-Royal Oak — A House member since 1981, Johnson will lose a portion of Royal Oak, but gains Troy, south of Big Beaver, and another portion of Troy north of Big Beaver and west of Livernois.
- Gordon Sparks, R-Troy — A state representative since 1983, Sparks will lose Rochester, a portion of western Rochester Hills — most of it west of Livernois and north of Auburn — and a portion of Troy, west of Livernois, south of I-75. He picks up a portion of eastern Troy, north of Big Beaver.
- Wilfred Webb, D-Hazel Park, who now represents a portion of southeastern Troy, wouldn't represent any Observer-Eccentric area communities under the panel-approved plan.

URBAN LEGISLATORS are threatening to challenge the plan under federal voting rights law because opponents claim it lacks an adequate number of minority-dominated districts.

A Michigan Supreme Court hearing on the new districts is scheduled for Wednesday, March 4. Written comments may be submitted to the court by Monday, March 2.

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GOP women host aide to Engler

The Oakland County Council of Republican Women Clubs are holding a luncheon featuring Colleen Pero, director of state affairs under Gov. John Engler, at 12:15 p.m. Friday at the Northfield Hilton in Troy.

An attorney, Pero oversees many aspects of the governor's office and staff activities, travelling with him and conducting briefings that are a part of the preparations for each day.

Cost is $22. For questions or reservations, please call publicist Constance Richards, 398-5463, or council president Hazel DeEulis, 651-6782.

Sorority alums meet in B'ham

At 11:30 a.m. Tuesday, members of the Oakland County alumnae of Delta Zeta Sorority will hold a general business meeting and present a slate of officers for 1992-'93.

All area alums are invited to attend the luncheon meeting, to take place at the home of a Birmingham member. Updates will be given on the group's national philanthropy of aid for the hearing impaired and on other on-going projects.

For reservations and further information, call Glenna Paukstis at 646-5727.

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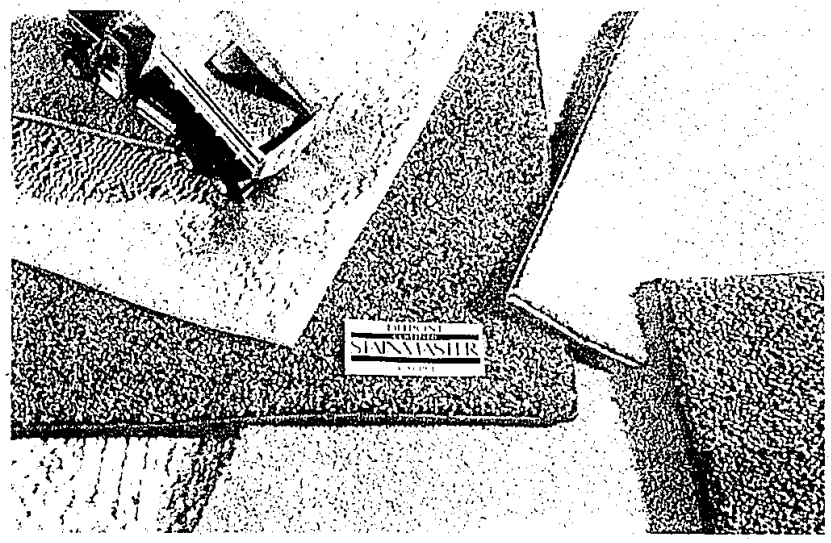

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