

Knollenberg, Honigman join race for Broomfield's seat

By Wayne Peal
Staff Writer

William Broomfield's retirement from Congress will prove a race, not an anointing.

Former Oakland County GOP chairman Joseph Knollenberg of Bloomfield Township will formally announce his candidacy today, prompting a Republican primary. He joins state Sen. David Honigman, R-West Bloomfield, in the race to succeed the veteran Congressman.

Knollenberg, a Troy-based insurance agent, is expected to receive Broomfield's endorsement.

"I can't say anything yet, but stay tuned," Knollenberg said Tuesday, adding that Broomfield encouraged him to run.

At the same time, Honigman announced he had received endorsement from former Oakland County prosecutor L. Brooks Patterson.

Other candidates may also join the race.

"I KNOW THERE are groups looking for candidates, but I haven't heard any names," current Oakland GOP chairman James Alexander said. "But with his name recognition and fund-raising ability, I've got to believe David is the odds-favorite."

The county party will remain neutral during the primary, Alexander said.

As yet, no Democrats have announced for the seat, but one could be close.

Honigman, who would have run against Broomfield, said he welcomed any and all challengers.

"This is a political process; no one can be anointed."

The district includes Birmingham, Bloomfield Hills, Farmington, Farmington Hills, Birmingham Farms, Franklin, Livernois Village and most of Southfield. Its Wayne County portion includes Redford and Livonia, north of 96.

Broomfield is resigning

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Broomfield said he will continue to represent the people of his district during his remaining months in office.

But he makes no bones about being dissatisfied with Washington politics.

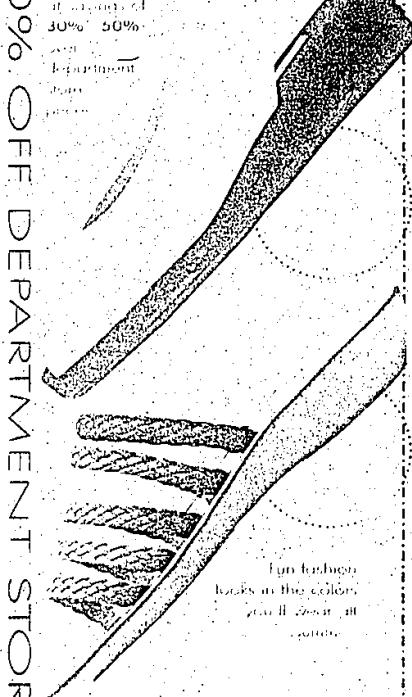
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THE HONIGMAN/KNOLLENBERG race could prove a battle between the party's old and new guard as well as a battle for Broomfield's longtime supporters.

Broomfield campaign treasurer Gerald Kosunensky of Orchard Lake endorsed Honigman in a statement released Tuesday through the state senator's office.

Both candidates promised an issue-oriented campaign.

Stressing his Illinois farm roots, Knollenberg called himself a fiscal conservative.

"I'm also pro-life to a point," he said, adding executions should be allowed unless cases of rape and incest or if the mother's life were in jeopardy.

While Knollenberg is putting his organization together, Honigman is already out campaigning.

"We'll be knocking on people's doors this weekend," he said.

Honigman is stressing job creation through elimination of "unnecessary business regulations" and tax cuts.

Knollenberg was county GOP chairman from 1978-86 and later led a slate of pro-George Bush delegates to the 1988 state convention. He currently serves on the state Republican Party candidate committee.

Honigman served three terms in the state House before becoming a state senator last year.

Honigman said his congressional campaign strategy wasn't changed because of Broomfield's departure — nor did he expect a race with Broomfield to have turned into the political bloodbath speculated by others.

"I HAVE A LOT of respect for Bill," said Honigman, who called Broomfield "a good man" who served local residents faithfully and honestly.

It would have been a gentlemanly campaign that centered on the issues," Honigman said. "I know that's a departure for this day and age, but that's what it would have been."

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