



Announcing the results: Gary Corbin (left) hands the results to Secretary of State Richard Austin, who made the announcement. Gov. Bill Clinton took all 18 votes.



Likes the result: Aldo Vagnozzi applauds after the results of Electoral College voting are tallied. His man, Gov. Bill Clinton, won all 18 votes.



Family support: Dan Herbert, a student at Farmington's Alternative Academy, and his teacher, Nancy Pantaleo, daughter of Aldo Vagnozzi, attended the voting.



Certifying results: Vagnozzi and 21-year-old Paul Gielegan Jr., the youngest elector, sign copies of the ballots to certify the results.

Local elector casts vote that really counts

BY TIM RICHARD
STAFF WRITER

Aldo Vagnozzi's job Monday was pretty clearly spelled out by the U.S. Constitution:

"The Electors shall meet in their respective states, and vote by ballot for President and Vice-President, one of whom, at least, shall not be an inhabitant of the same state with themselves; they shall name in their ballots the person voted for as President, and in distinct ballots the person voted for as Vice-President, and they shall make distinct lists of all persons voted for as President, and of all persons voted for as Vice-President, and of the number of votes for each, which lists they shall sign and certify, and transmit sealed to the seat of the government of the United States, directed to the President of the Senate."

So Vagnozzi went to Lansing with wife Lois and son Paul, a Farmington Hills computer businessman. Along came daughter Nancy Pantaleo, a Farmington Alternative Academy teacher accompanied by a pupil. Son Steve, a state Commerce Department employee, met them in the Capitol.

As one of Michigan's 18 presidential electors, Vagnozzi's job was to help officially to elect the president and vice president of the U.S.

The Democratic team of Clinton-Gore won a plurality, 43 percent, of Michigan's popular vote Nov. 3 and was entitled to all 18 Michigan electors.

No initials

"Your ballot has your name on it," said Vagnozzi. "We have to write in their names — Bill Clinton and Al Gore. We're not using middle initials."

He joked that the Farmington Democratic Club sent along someone to make sure he voted for the right pair. But it really wasn't necessary.

"After Zoltan Fereny in 1968, Michigan passed a law that if you vote for someone other than the party nominee, you automatically resign your position," Vagnozzi said.

Fereny, a socialist maverick, rebelled at having to vote for Hubert Humphrey for president but resigned as a presidential elector and let the party appoint someone else.

Humphrey had lost anyway, to Richard Nixon, but until Monday it was the last time Michigan had cast any Electoral College votes for a Democrat.

A five-minute job was turned into an hour-long ceremony in the newly restored State Senate chamber. Vagnozzi was one of two tellers, distributing a white ballot for the presidential candidate, a green one for vice president.

Secretary of State Richard Austin got to make the official announcement: "Bill Clinton received every vote from Michigan . . . Al Gore received all 18."

Then the electors signed six certificates. "The state archives get two. The president of the Senate (Dan Gonyea) gets one. The results go to Congress to certify in January," Vagnozzi said.

Young missing

Most of Michigan's presidential electors had two things in common.

Like Vagnozzi, 67, they were longtime party members (except for 21-year-old Paul Gielegan Jr. of Macomb County). Like Vagnozzi, former editor of the AFL-CIO News and a dues paying member of the Newspaper Guild, the majority were from organized labor.

There was one no-show: Detroit Mayor Coleman Young. That raised some eyebrows but surprised no one. Young has been a city delegate to the Southeast Michigan Council of Government for 19 years but has never attended a meeting, and he rarely sits with the Michigan delegates at national conventions.

State party chair Gary Corbin nominated Larry Simmons to take Young's place, and the other 16 electors duly voted yes.

'How sweet it is'

Vagnozzi and the others had

been nominated by a mid-year Democratic State Convention.

"A number who wanted to be considered put their names in," he said. "The district officers made the recommendations. We haven't met as the new district yet."

"It was a recognition of those who delivered the vote," said Vagnozzi, who managed a telephone bank that made 5,000 election day voter contacts.

It was the first time Democrat Vagnozzi had held a partisan public office. He moved to Farmington Hills in 1960, when it was still a township, and it has always voted Republican. On non-partisan ballots, he has been elected to the school board and city council, serving the latter as mayor.

After Republican Lt. Gov. Connie Binsfeld opened the session, electors picked Corbin as chair and seven honorary chairs, including state AFL-CIO president Frank Garrison, Young, former Gov. James Blanchard of Beverly Hills, and Wayne County Executive Ed McNamara of Livonia. Blanchard and McNamara were no-shows.

"How sweet it is!" said Garrison. It was a far cry from his remarks last March, when he considered Clinton unelectable and wondered when the other slipper would drop.

"The long drought of government being an evil instrument, unconcerned and disconnected is over," Garrison said in a speech from the rostrum.

Three other honorary chairs delivered similar remarks with a political convention flavor. But Corbin, a former minister, added "one sobering thought. Power is transitory. We must adhere to the principle of putting people first."

The job was done by 3 p.m., but Vagnozzi had more to do. That evening he had a meeting of the Farmington Hills City Council.

For being a presidential elector, Vagnozzi got no pay and no reimbursement for the 140-mile round trip. "I even lost a day's pay at work," said the editorial consultant for Inland Press in Detroit, adding:

"But in four years, I'd like the chance to do it again."



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