

Patterson claims innocence in 'deputygate' scandal

By PAT MURPHY
STAFF WRITER

Oakland County Executive L. Brooks Patterson said he was unaware that sheriff's deputies were working when they acted as drivers in last fall's political campaign.

"I was led to believe these deputies were not in a position to make financial contributions, but they wanted to help out in the campaign," Patterson said Friday.

"These deputies are a key part of a scandal in the sheriff's department — a case Prosecutor Richard Thompson described as the biggest case of public corruption in Oakland County history."

During a press conference Thursday Thompson and Sheriff John F. Nichols acknowledged they have asked state officials to assign auditors and/or investigators to help in the investigation.

Both the prosecutor's office and the sheriff's office have already devoted 75 percent of their inves-

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Oakland County executive*

igative resources, Thompson said. Assistance from the Department of Treasury or the Attorney General's office is needed.

Another reason, Thompson said, is the involvement of Patterson, who was Oakland County prosecutor before going into private law practice and last fall being elected county executive.

"I'm not suggesting he (Patterson) has done anything wrong," Thompson said. "But he was my friend and mentor for a long time."

The decision to seek outside assistance was generally greeted with enthusiasm by other county officials. "I've said from the beginning that it would be helpful to

have an outside agency help with the investigation," said county commissioner Lawrence Pernick, D-Southfield.

"That way the final outcome could not be subject to allegations of political influence. I applaud the prosecutor's decision."

Thompson and Nichols both said the investigation will likely result in additional criminal warrants as well as departmental discipline for those involved. Furthermore, said Nichols, supervisory personnel in addition to Gerard Carlin, the former commander of the sheriff's substation in Rochester Hills, could well be included. "We were misled," Nichols said.

The scandal involves three separate allegations. One alleges deputies under then-Capt. Carlin, now demoted to sergeant, acted as chauffeurs for Patterson while on duty. Another alleges that deputies and/or supervisors in the work release program had inmates work on their homes or vehicles in exchange for favors.

The third involves a civilian employee, Terry A. Malers, 32, accused of taking cash from the sheriff's property room. At his examination in district court,

Malers' defense lawyer said he will argue his client has a gambling disease that contributed to his using some of the money to buy lottery tickets.

While the case involving Malers is in court, Thompson and Nichols said the investigations in the other two cases continue to expand.

"Each time (an investigator) talks to someone, something else springs up," Nichols said. Some information is groundless, while other allegations seem to have

substance and require further work.

More warrants, possibly involving families, are likely within three weeks, the prosecutor said.

Patterson, in the meantime, said he is personally distressed that deputies who assisted his campaign may be in trouble.

"I wasn't so much accepting contributions from deputies," Patterson said Friday. "I was accepting contributions from friends."

Sheriff: Honest cops unfairly tainted


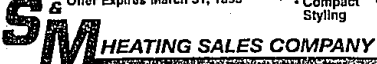
Sheriff John F. Nichols is concerned — and angry — that honest deputies under his command are unfairly tarnished by the ongoing investigation into his department, described as the biggest case of public corruption in Oakland County history.

Asked for an example, Nichols cited the following. On one occasion, a deputy making a traffic stop got this response from a motorist: "Why are you bothering with me? There's more profit in the property room."

A civilian in the property room is accused of taking money seized in drug raids — as much as \$80,000 — and spending at least some of it on lottery tickets.

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Under terms of the agreement, OCC teachers will also get to use software not yet released to evaluate its potential for use in the classroom.

dent Richard Saunders said OCC was approached by TMI because OCC's Advanced Technology Center has a really good reputation.

"They knew we had the equipment to run the software and the faculty qualified to evaluate it," he said. "They also know that because many manufacturing and design companies hold meetings and seminars on campus, their product will receive exposure throughout the industry."

The agreement is expected to benefit TMI because the manufacturing and design companies that often visit the Auburn Hills campus will see the software in action. The college benefits, Saunders said, by making the latest design and manufacturing software available to students.

"Software for computer aided design systems is extremely expensive and changes constantly," he said. "This partnership will enable us to offer state-of-the-art CIM technology with a minimal investment on our part."

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