

Cooper included in Supreme Court candidate forum

BY PAT MURPHY
STAFF WRITER

She was originally excluded. But after flashing her "feisty" nature, Supreme Court hopeful Jessica R. Cooper has been invited to be part of a candidate forum sponsored by the Grand Rapids Bar Association.

Cooper, a Beverly Hills resident, was invited late Tuesday after the association reconsidered an earlier decision to exclude her, according to executive director Deirdre Toeller-Novak. "We just decided to

include her (Cooper)," Toeller-Novak said.

The decision not to invite her was a matter of practicality, said the bar spokesperson. "She (Cooper) is not a major party candidate, and any time she gets will take away from the time available to the other candidates who are more likely to win."

The Grand Rapids bar had originally invited four supreme court candidates — incumbent Justice James Brickley and Oakland Circuit Judge Hilda Gage, nominated by Republi-

cans, and William Murphy of East Grand Rapids and appeals court Judge Marilyn J. Kelly of Bloomfield Hills, nominated by the Democrats.

Not invited were candidates Cooper, who circulated her own nominating petitions, and the two Libertarian Party candidates, Jerry J. Kaufman and David H. Ruffalo.

Michigan supreme court candidates are nonpartisan, although they are usually nominated by political parties. Cooper won her nomination by circulating petitions.

Having come this far in her quest for the state's highest court, Cooper was outraged at being excluded from the Grand Rapids forum. "They (the bar) didn't seem to understand," she said. "Supreme Court justice is a nonpartisan position. Why should nonpartisan candidates like me be excluded?"

"I could understand that reasoning... except that it came from lawyers, who should know better."

The situation is particularly

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On Nov. 5, voters will select one of the two following candidates to fill the job for four years:

Incumbent Republican L. Brooks Patterson, 57, of Waterford is seeking his second consecutive term as Oakland County executive. He is a graduate of the University of Detroit, 1961, and the University of Detroit Law School, 1967.

Patterson was Oakland County prosecutor from 1972 until 1988 after which he was a partner in the law firm of Patterson, Potter, Carnick & Anderson in Auburn Hills. Elected Oakland County executive in 1992.

He is the founder of the Rainbow Connection, a charity that grants the final wishes of dying children, and a member of the board of directors of the March of Dimes.

He and his wife, Kathleen, were married in 1976, a second marriage for each. They live in Waterford and have four grown children, Dayne, Shawn, Mary Margaret and Brooks.

Patterson said the most influential person in his adult life was Judge Clark Adams, before whom he practiced as an assistant prosecutor.

Democrat Edward T. Hamilton, 53, of Troy is a new vehicle launch manager for Chrysler.

He was born in Indonesia and graduated from Michigan State University in 1967 with a business degree. He joined Chrysler

In short, the executive is the chief executive officer for the county who is responsible for a majority of the county's 4,300 employees and oversees the annual budget, about \$450 million for 1996.

as a management trainee and has progressed through the ranks to his present position.

He is a member of, or has been affiliated with, a number of civic organizations including Durks Unlimited, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and the Troy League of Women Voters. Hamilton said the most influential person in his adult life was President John F. Kennedy because of the way he changed the political structure of his day and energized young voters.

Hamilton and his wife Silvia live in Troy. They have two youngsters, Adam, 13, and Krystle, 12.

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tive expects to lead the GOP ticket in Oakland County, said the aide, and he wants counsils to carry other Republican with him.

Patterson readily admits one goal has eluded him in his first term, just as it eluded his predecessor, Daniel T. Murphy.

The problem, Patterson said, is a tax imbalance. Under existing statutes and regulations, Oakland County is, in effect, a "cash cow," milked at the convenience of the state legislature for the benefit of other areas.

For every dollar Oakland residents pay in gasoline taxes, for example, the county gets back about 60 cents. The figure

varies, Patterson said, but the principal remains the same: Oakland pays billions of dollars in state taxes, but gets very little in return.

Other counties, in contrast, pay less in taxes, but get back much more, he said.

The problem developed over the decades, Patterson said. "And it won't be resolved overnight."

Oakland will never get back all the tax dollars it sends to Lansing, Patterson said. "But we might be able to get back a better share," he said. And that would give Oakland more money to use on its own problems.

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tion. "That was a very lame excuse. The invitations went out in July."

Hamilton believes Patterson is ducking him on the campaign trail — something Patterson doesn't deny — at the one time voters have a right to expect to see the incumbent.

At that forum, Hamilton gave at least one example of the fresh approach he wants to bring to government. When the Detroit Lions vacate the Pontiac Silverdome, why not get a new team, "possibly one from the Canadian Football League."

The idea may not be feasible, he said. But unless somebody has an idea, the county will be

doomed to the same old thinking and same old problems.

Besides being a "High tech Democrat," Hamilton prides himself on being a "different Democrat." He believes in term limits, for example.

Hamilton believes labor unions can be useful. "They are at Chrysler," he said. "They're part of the team."

While few people give him a chance in the Nov. 5 election, Hamilton confidently predicts an upset. "Look at our team," he said, referring to President Clinton, Sen. Carl Levin and other Democrats expected to do well. "This could be another landslide year like 1964."

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