

Fieger may seek governor's office

BY PAT MURPHY
STAFF WRITER

Geoffrey N. Fieger is thinking about an assisted suicide... this one for the political career of Gov. John Engler.

If Engler decides to run for a third term, I may be duty-bound to run for governor," Fieger said Tuesday in response to questions about his future.

Although Michigan voters won't vote for governor until November 1998, the race has been shaping up for months as potential candidates line up support and assess their chances.

Engler has not announced his candidacy for a third term. But earlier this week he seemed to hint he would.

That was Monday in Dearborn at a \$1,000-a-head fund raiser Monday as supporters were chanting "four more years."

Fieger was highly critical of Engler two years ago while he was defending his most famous client, Dr. Jack Kevorkian, on charges of violating Michigan's statutes against assisted suicide.

Fieger insisted Engler supported the statutes as well as continued efforts in the Legislature to get an enforceable law on the books.

Except for being involved in a recall effort aimed at officials in West Bloomfield Township, Fieger hasn't been political involved. Furthermore, he admits not having taken any preliminary steps needed to form the political base needed to run for Michigan's highest elected office.

"But I really don't have to," he



"I don't need a job. I wouldn't want to take the pay cut, and I don't like government. The main reason I would run is to kick butt and to make state government more responsive."

Geoffrey N. Fieger
—Outspoken attorney

said. "I have name recognition, and in many ways I'm the ideal candidate."

In arguing that he doesn't need the position, Fieger said, "I don't need a job. I wouldn't want to take the pay cut, and I don't like government," he said. "The main reason I would run is to kick butt and to make state government more responsive."

It's impossible to accurately determine how many times, if any, Fieger is mentioned when Democrats speculate about 1998.

His certainly isn't among announced candidates like Lansing attorney Larry Owen, State Sen. Jim Barryman of Adrian, former Michigan commerce director Doug Ross or Troy businessman Ed Hamilton.

But Democrats are reportedly unhappy with the announced field and supposedly looking for a change for a somebody who is straight forward and doesn't mince words or ideas. "Look at what Engler tried to do with insurance reform," he said. "After ballot proposals were defeated, he still tried to get changes for his pals in the insurance industry."

Fieger said he has been contacted by at least one well-known Democrat, former Detroit Mayor Coleman A. Young. "One of his allies said Coleman Young wanted to talk to me about politics," Fieger said. "But I haven't called him back yet."

Democrats aren't the only ones speculating about the party ticket, according to Oakland County GOP chair Cathy Longo of Troy. "The Governor's Gala was very successful," she said. "Most people think the governor will be re-elected if he runs. But word that he might not run has people speculating."

Among the Republicans most commonly considered candidates are Oakland Executive L. Brooks Patterson, U.S. Rep. Joe Knollenberg of Farmington Hills and State Sen. Dick Posthumus of Alto.

Gary Artinian of Bloomfield Township has already filed for the governor's race and is raising money. Among other things, Artinian, a physician, is running because he believes government is too concerned about things like potholes while neglecting more important concerns like the

state of health care, said press secretary Mike Dorfman.

The list of potential candidates in each party is yet another reason he is seriously considering a bid for governor, said Fieger. "All those candidates are mediocre at best," he said. "Most would be incompetent."

Fieger believes Michigan is ripe for a somebody who is straight forward and doesn't mince words or ideas. "Look at what Engler tried to do with insurance reform," he said. "After ballot proposals were defeated, he still tried to get changes for his pals in the insurance industry."

Fieger was most vocal in his criticism of Engler in 1995 when Kevorkian underwent back-to-back trials on charges of violating Michigan's laws against assisted suicide. Both ended in acquittals.

Fieger referred to Engler — as well as some court of appeals judges — as "religious nuts."

If he does decide to run for governor, voters shouldn't expect him to tone down his criticism, Fieger said, even if it hampers what polls commonly refer to as "electability."

"If being electable means having to speak out of both sides of your mouth," he said, "then voters had better redefine what they want in their elected officials."

"If I run for governor, I won't pull punches," he said.

That's an endearing quality in the courtroom, Fieger insisted, and it would be refreshing in a campaign.

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