

Announce

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House Bill 4777, which he said is still alive in committee, though Raczkowski has said it's dead. Tie-barred to several other proposed laws, it would have standardized certain ordinances regarding businesses statewide.

Surprised by Raczkowski's public statements that he favors local control, Vagnozzi said, "That's like Jesse James saying he was in support of the banking industry, or the Boston Strangler claiming he put his arm around his victims to show them affection."

Councils from both cities have joined a statewide petition drive for a ballot question that would require a "super majority" before

any state law is passed that affects local ordinances. However, Raczkowski argues, what's in the best interest of the cities is not always in the best interest of the citizens.

"Local control for us is getting government out of people's lives, they can make their own decisions," he said Thursday afternoon. "When a vote comes up where it's cities versus citizens, I side with the citizens."

Raczkowski considers cities special interest groups and pointed out they hire lobbyists to represent their interests at the state capital.

While he hasn't formally announced his candidacy for re-

election in the 37th District, Raczkowski has said he intends to run for what would be his last term. He said it seemed a little early to start campaigning in February, when people have so many other issues on their minds.

Raczkowski laughed out loud when asked for a response to Vagnozzi's most strident assertions: that his vote is influenced by political action committee campaign contributions and that a "Leadership PAC" he established has been a vehicle propelling him toward his present post as majority leader and, perhaps, a position as Speaker of the House.

"He can make it an issue, but whatever I can do to get Farmington and Farmington Hills a greater voice in the Legislature is a good thing," Raczkowski said. "I think we need to expand our involvement in political elections."

The majority of those funds, he said, comes from citizens, a portion of the money donated to other candidates comes with no strings attached. In any case, Raczkowski pointed out, he could only serve one more term due to term limits.

"How can he say I'm using this to build a solid power base?" he commented. "It's quite illegal to buy votes. I have always followed the letter and the spirit of the Michigan Campaign Finance Act."



Here he is: Farmington Hills City Councilwoman Vicki Barnett introduces former Mayor Aldo Vagnozzi as he announces his candidacy for the 37th District state House seat.

Vagnozzi sent out a letter asking for an agreement on spending limits and refusal of PAC contributions and said Thursday morning he hadn't gotten a response. While Raczkowski said he responded, his letter didn't answer the requests directly.

Absent that agreement, Vagnozzi acknowledged Thursday he would probably accept PAC donations, but only from organizations that represented local citizens. He said he would continue the policy he established when running for local office, of not accepting donations from anyone who might be com-

ing before him to ask for project approvals, permits or other special requests.

While his primary concern will be preserving home rule, Vagnozzi's first public campaign speech included a number of issues he plans to discuss:

- Use of state surplus funds to take better care of people with mental health problems. Case-workers at homeless centers have told him half their clientele are patients kicked out of mental institutions, many of whom land in jail. "It's a shame on the state not to take care of these people."
- More funding to ensure bet-

ter care in nursing homes.

■ Seeing that the Farmington/Farmington Hills area isn't shorted as the state examines a new formula for funding roads.

■ Increasing the property tax rebate for senior citizens, which hasn't changed since it was established 25 years ago.

In addition, Vagnozzi intends to "open up" the process of government, by establishing neighborhood representatives citizens could go to with questions about state government; hosting legislative hearings locally, so citizens could testify; and sponsoring group trips to Lansing.



Why: Aldo Vagnozzi tells the 30-some guests at his announcement Thursday why he is seeking election to the state House.

Subscribers complain about cable rates, but there's no control

Not too long ago, as I was driving into work, I heard a little guy on the Dick Purtan show. The caller was asked which increased more over the past several years: prices for airline tickets, sporting events or cable service?

Well, I nearly jumped into the radio shouting "Cable!" But he, I was wrong. The winner was airline tickets, followed by sporting events, with cable taking up the rear.

We get plenty of calls here at the Southwestern Oakland Cable Commission (SWOCC) from cable subscribers complaining about rates. But there's nothing we can do. We don't allow Time Warner to charge those rates, we only enforce the Federal Cable Commission's rate structure for the basic tier (channels 1-22). And our analysis has found that Time Warner is charging below what the FCC

allows them to charge.

As for the rest of the channels, well, Time Warner can charge whatever it wants. The FCC deregulated rates last April. If its any consolation, I just read an article in Multi-channel News that indicated cable operators are keeping rate increases "moderate" this year, meaning below 5 percent.

Time Warner's 5 percent rate increase in our communities is comparable to last year's, but far less than the 12.5 percent jump in January of 1998. Also, there are some cable services which actually cost less than last year, like the installation of an addi-



CAREN COLLINS

tional outlet and the hourly service fee. However, I'm sure this doesn't make anyone who has experienced the 76 percent rate hike over the past 10 years feel any better.

And, since the Consumer Price Index measured general price increases of 2 percent over the past year, we're certainly not thrilled about the increases which are double that. The trade continuously emphasizes that programming costs and expenditures for upgrades and new services have skyrocketed recently.

So, what's a cable watcher to do?

Some believe competition is the answer. In fact, FCC Chairman Bill Kennard subscribes to that belief.

But a friend of mine in Allen Park just switched from AmeriSat to Comcast for \$1.30 savings. But, she still pays 82 cents more than I do for expanded basic ser-

vice. Although there is no direct cable competition in this market, there are other places to turn. In fact, the cable industry has received some competitive pressures from direct-broadcast satellite services. Last summer numbers showed that 82 percent of TV viewers used cable compared with 85 percent the year before. But satellite has a long way to go. It offers service in 14 million households nationwide while cable has a whopping 67 million customers.

Last month President Clinton signed a bill allowing dish services to offer local channels. But here in the Detroit area that means only channels 2, 4, 7 and 62. Channels 50, 20 and 56 are not part of the deal. So, Red Wings, Pistons and Tigers fans are out of luck. Furthermore,

satellite doesn't carry the local public, educational and government channels. So the impact this will have on cable remains to be seen.

Then there's always the video rental store.

Additionally, few subscribers realize they can receive basic cable for as low as \$11.03. Unfortunately, we've received calls from residents claiming that Time Warner Cable failed to mention this when they called.

So, you have to specifically ask for this. But it is possible to receive all the local broadcast channels and the access channels for just a little more than \$10. There are even some folks

who subscribe to the basic service for the local channels and purchase a dish for the other stuff.

What will cable rates look like in the future? Ah, if only I had a crystal ball. But rest assured that for now, expenses are rising, and that's often reflected in the rates.

Caren Collins is the executive director of the Southwestern Oakland Cable Commission. The next SWOCC meeting is at 4:30 p.m., Tuesday, Feb. 29 at Farmington City Hall. The next CACAO meeting is 7 p.m., Tuesday, Feb. 8 at SWOCC.



Teens with Headache

Michigan Head-Pain & Neurological Institute is conducting a research study evaluating a potential treatment for migraines in adolescents. Participants must be 12 to 17 years old and suffer two to ten headaches per month. Participants receive study-related medical care at no cost and will be compensated for time and travel. Please call our Research Staff for more information.

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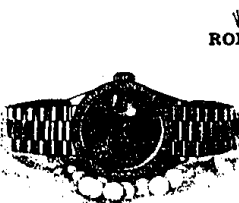


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Are You Depressed?

Answer the following questions based on the last 2 weeks or more.

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|--------------------------|--------------------------|
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If you answered "yes" to 3 or more statements, you may be suffering from depression, a serious condition affecting millions of Americans. The Institute for Health Studies is currently looking for individuals experiencing the above symptoms to participate in a research study of integrational medication for depression. If you are selected, all research-related costs and study medication are provided at no cost. Get answers and information about depression.

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