#### **POINTS OF VIEW**

## Polls indicate support dwindling for school voucher plan

ell, well. Here we go again.
The proposal to legalize a
voucher system for students in "failing" public schools is
almost certainly headed for a vote in

Kids First! Yes!, the outfit sponsoring the constitutional amendment to end the ban on spending public funds for private and parochial schools, has submitted more than enough petition signatures - 302,000 required 463,000 turned in - to the state Elections Commission to put the measure

on the ballot. It wasn't cheap to get all those signatures. The December filing submit ted to the Election Commission shows payments totaling \$307,487.48 to National Petition Management of Southfield. At least some of the peti-tion circulators were paid rather than

The most controversial aspect of the proposal would create and fund vouchers - called "Opportunity Schol-arships" - for kids in "failing" school districts to use at private or religious schools. The vouchers, if approved, would be worth about \$2,700 (approximately one half the current state po pupil funding grant), which could be

A failing district is one which has a "four year graduation rate of less than two thirds," according to the pro-

Thirty Michigan school districts have graduation rates under 66 per-cent, including Detroit and Inkster.

The proposed amendment would also allow any other school district in the state to set up a voucher system if a majority of local residents vote to do so. That means that the constitution-al "failing school" limitation on spend

al Talling school ilmitation on spend-ing public money for private schools can be overturned by a local vote. The historic politics of the proposal are unhopeful to supporters. "Parochi-aid" has appeared on the Michigan statewide ballet twice, losing badly both times.

The purest occasion was in 1970, when a constitutional amendment designed specifically to prohibit pubtile tax dollars going to private and parochial schools passed, 56 percent to 44 percent. The idea reappeared on the ballot in 1978, packaged this time with a property tax cut and known as the "Tisch Amendment." It went

Although this is 22 years later,



when the deterioration of urban schools has reached crisis proportions and education ranks tops on the list of voter concerns, the Kids First! Yes! of voter concerns, the Mois First I test proposal so far is getting support from less than 60 percent of those polled, far below the 65-70 percent approval that conventional wisdom says is necessary going into a campaign to amend the constitution.

amend the constitution.

Moreover, getting the measure on
the ballot has already precipitated a
serious split in the Michigan Republican Party. Gov. John Engler has repeatedly and vigorously argued it's bad politics, for fear of hurting Sen.

Biggest backer is Dick De Vos, the AmWay billionaire from Grand Rapide, who says he'll raise \$5 million to support it and whose wife, Betsy, just resigned as Michigan GOP state

The best argument for the voucher program is simple. Most parents will do anything in their power to get good education for their kids. But poor parents who live in inner cities with cruddy public schools can't afford private or parochial ones, which are usu-ally much better. And when even the most passionate believers in school reform can't promise urban schools will improve quickly, what's wrong with giving vouchers to poor folks to use to help their kids while things are getting better?

The best argument against vouch ers – leaving out for the moment the basic gut reaction to spending public tax dollars on religious and private institutions – is that they would essentially suck money out of the pub-

lic school system.
Using vouchers as a way of fixing the public schools, the argument goes is like the assertion made during the war in Vietnam that we could save

عوو هر أبولوالمان Party. Gov. John Engler has repeatedly and vigorously argued it's bad politics ...

the village only by destroying it. In this regard, the case of the Inkster school district is instructive

Over the years, the district got so bad that enough parents pulled their kids out and sent them to private and charter schools that the district simply didn't have enough enrollment — and the state per-pupil foundation grant that goes with it — to sustain a financially viable district.

Phil Power is chairman of Home-Town Communications Network Inc., the company that owns this newspaper. He welcomes your comments, either by voice mail at (734) 953-2047, ext. 1880, or by e-mail at ppower@ homecomm.net. Kids First! Yes!, spon sors of the petition drive, can be con-tacted at (1-888) 330-KIDS. The group opposed, ALL Kids First!, can be reached at (517) 327-2589.

#### Deal with OPEC,

Big Oil am writing today to express my deep concerns on a mat-ter of foreign policy and how it is affecting our overall economy. I am concerned because it appears as though Congress is failing to pay proper attention to the matter. At issue is oil and OPEC and the big oil companies are plundering the bank accounts of the citizens of this great country.

I will grant you that the

price of oil one year ago was at ridiculously low levels, which, if we have done our homework, we see was caused by OPEC's dumping of surplus capacity on to the world markets. This cre-ated a glut of oil and, in turn,

Further analysis reveals a breakdown or lack of unity among OPEC members. Their greed caused their own prob-

Now OPEC has unified and again their greed has come back to prominence. One year

ago oil was selling on the market at \$10-\$12 per barrel Today it is approaching \$30. Pump prices for a gallon of gasoline have been as high as \$1.50 for unleaded regular, far the early '80s or during the Gulf War.

OPEC has created an artificial shortage by withholding oil from the market.

My charge to members of Congress is to please schedule hearings on this matter as

the feet of the oil companies to the fire until they explain to the American public satisfactorily, and correct this horrendous problem which they have created through their

unabashed greed. While we're at it, isn't it about time for the United States to start flexing its eco-nomic muscles and make life a little more difficult for the

OPEC countries?
Shouldn't we remind Saudi
Arabia and Kuwait of the number of American lives lost and

the billions of dollars spent in defense of those countries? If our military had not been employed Kuwait would now be the southernmost province of Iraq. Shouldn't Venezuela remember the response of U.S. citizens when their country experienced severe loss of life and property during recent flooding? The list goes on and

I am deeply troubled to make this next statement, but I and many people I know feel Congress has failed to act for

fear of losing "soft money" from "Big Oil." Also, that OPEC could possibly retaliate by increasing costs of oil production further.

On the surface it appears as though Congress has failed to respond to this terrible act of

Please let your congressperson and senators know your thinking on this situation as soon as possible.

Ralph H. Shufeldt

### IMPORTANT SAFETY RECALL

#### TIM HORTONS HOME COFFEE BREWER

## Coffee Pot Recall



In co-operation with the US Consumer Product Safety Commission, Tim Hortons is recalling the coffee pot sold in conjunction with the Tim Hortons Coffee Brewer.

We have learned of a manufacturing defect which may result in the coffee pot handle breaking. This could potentially cause injury from hot liquid or glass breakage. Consumers should immediately stop using the coffee pot.

This recall notice applies only to black-colored Tim Hortons Home Brewer units sold at Tim Hortons from October 1999 to February 2000.

So whether your pot handle has broken or not, in the interest of your safety, we kindly request that you call us or bring your pot back to us.

Please call our toll-free number below or:

Here's what you do: - Return your coffee pot to a Tim Hortons store. - Our Tim Hortons staff will present you with a \$5.00 gift certificate booklet in exchange

for your coffee pot.
You should fill out a recall tag that our staff will provide for you.

Our store will fax the recall tag to our Recall Centre.

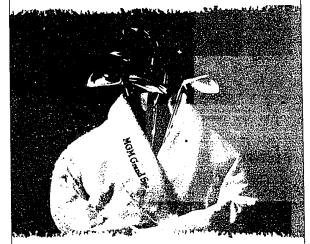
You can expect to receive your new coffee pot by courier within one week.

If you have any questions regarding this recall, please give us a call. Toll Free Number:

1-888-BREW-TIM (1-888-273-9846)

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