

# County candidates wage vigorous campaigns

By ROBERT KIPPER

OAKLAND COUNTY—In August voters approved a plan to unify Oakland County government under an elected county executive. Tuesday they must fill the position designed to be the most powerful in county government.

Eugene Kuthy, Democrat, and Daniel Murphy, Republican, have run exhaustive, highly visible campaigns. They have faced each other in debate numerous times throughout the county.

Although their debates have been criticized for avoiding detailed discussion of programs and platforms, they have brought out sharp differences between the men.

Eugene Kuthy, who worked for the adoption of the elected county executive, has portrayed himself as the reform candidate, pledging to streamline and "stir up" what he considers an inefficient county operation.

"The county has no obvious smoking scandals," Kuthy has said. "But, as any observer knows, there is overlapping and duplication among county departments and services."

"There is a lack of coordination and the opportunity to confuse and hold up programs."

Using more heated language, Kuthy has also said:

"The Republicans have been in office too long in the county. The election of Dan Murphy would be a signal to every slacker and do-nothing in county government that it will remain business as usual."

Daniel Murphy, who has served as chief county administrator under various titles for 11 years, has defended county operations. Standing on his record, Murphy has pledged to continue what he considers an efficient and model-like county operation.



EUGENE W. KUTHY



DANIEL T. MURPHY

"People today look for honesty and integrity in government," Murphy has said. "That's what I've given them."

Referring to Kuthy, Murphy said: "A mouthful of promises and a handful of nothing is not what the public is going to vote for. He can talk about reform all he wants. I haven't seen one scintilla of evidence of what that reform will be."

UNDER THE PLAN approved by county voters in August, the elected county executive will have many of the powers and responsibilities formerly held by the chairman of the board of auditors (the position Murphy has held). He will be the chief administrator of the county.

However, the elected executive will have an important new power: the power to veto any action by the Oakland County Board of Commissioners. Previously the chairman of the

board of auditors worked behind-the-scenes to get programs passed—or stopped—by the board of commissioners. The executive, however, can more openly urge programs—a position designed to make the executive more accountable for county actions.

How each of the candidates will treat this new power has been discussed repeatedly throughout the campaign.

Murphy, while admitting that the veto power will strengthen his hand in influencing county actions, feels that sweeping changes shouldn't be expected.

"The buck stops with me now," he has said.

"People will get to know me better and learn more about my position," he said. "I will be holding press conferences and be issuing more policy statements."

Otherwise, Murphy has maintained,

county operations would continue to be the same.

Kuthy has promised a more activist role if elected.

He has said he would "make county government responsible, accountable and visible."

Kuthy, meanwhile, insists he is not a "wide-eyed radical," as he charges his opponent has claimed. His campaign slogan — "A dollar's worth of government for every dollar's worth of taxes" — was chosen to describe what he said would be a "businesslike and prudent" administration.

SHERIFF JOHANNES SPREEN, the highest ranking Democrat in county government, has been an important issue in this campaign.

Kuthy, who has had high praise for the way Spreen is doing his job, has pledged to give enthusiastic support to Spreen's law enforcement programs for the county.

Murphy has been involved in county commission battles with Spreen over the sheriff's attempt to expand his department. He has strongly criticized Spreen.

KUTHY, 43, of Orchard Lake, is a management consultant. A graduate of the Detroit College of Law, he is married and the father of four children. Kuthy is also a part-time teacher of government and business policy at the University of Michigan.

Professional experience includes counsel to the American Academy of Transportation, contract administrator with Burroughs and Chrysler corporations, and as associate in a Royal Oak law firm.

Kuthy is a member of the Oakland County Planning Commission and is Democratic chairman of the 19th Congressional District.

MURPHY, 46, of Sylvan Lake, is the appointed county executive of Oakland County. For the past 11 years, he has performed essentially the same job under the title of chairman of the Board of Auditors.

He is married and father of five children.

Murphy began county service in 1956 when he was appointed register of deeds. In 1958, he was elected county clerk.

As chairman of the Board of Auditors, Murphy has represented the

county on numerous state and national organizations including the National Association of County Administrators, the International City Managers Association and the Michigan Association for Counties.

This year only, the county executive will be elected to a two-year term. Starting in 1976, the executive will be elected to four-year terms. His salary is \$45,000 and he will be the third highest paid county executive in the nation.

## 2 wage campaigns for probate court

By ROBERT KIPPER

OAKLAND COUNTY—Voters will be asked to make a choice in only one of the two Oakland County Probate Court judgeships on Tuesday's ballot.

Incumbent Probate Judge Eugene A. Moore is unopposed for a regular six-year term. Moore, 38, of Birmingham, has served on the probate bench since 1967.

The only probate contest this year is for a new six-year judgeship to be filled. Barry M. Grant and John J. O'Brien are competing for the new position.

BARRY M. GRANT, 38, of Southfield, is married and the father of three children. He is a graduate of the Wayne State University Law School. He is an attorney and probate court referee.

Grant named these as major issues facing probate court:

- "Reduction and prevention of youth crime through a program of firmness with understanding."
- "Expediting probating of estates, thus reducing costs and hardships upon the survivors."
- "Providing better mental health and retardation facilities and services at no additional cost."

Asked to name the most important

judicial ethics problem, and how it might be solved, Grant said:

"Judges must possess the highest integrity, be firm in their decisions and uphold the law in such a manner that will result in a safer society. This can be accomplished by the election of well-qualified individuals who are representative of all the people, and not special interest groups."

Grant said he would oppose having judges appointed rather than elected. "However," he added, "there should be a basic requirement that a lawyer must practice a certain number of years before becoming eligible to be a judicial candidate."

JOHN J. O'BRIEN, 44, of Birmingham, is married and the father of six children. A graduate of the University of Detroit and Wayne State University, he is an attorney.

He is not the current Oakland County judge. A man with a nearly identical name, John N. O'Brien, is a circuit judge.

According to O'Brien the three major issues facing probate court are:

- "Stemming the rise of juvenile delinquency and youth crime."
- "Improving the court service and efficiency to the people."

• "Maintaining local control over our courts."

O'Brien cited the current practice of financing judicial races as the most serious ethical problem.

"I favor a system of public financing of the campaign expenses," he said. "This would put all candidates on an even footing with a limit on campaign spending and would also prevent a wealthy candidate 'buying' an election."

O'Brien said he favored the current practice of electing instead of appointing judges because "an appointive system would result in a small group of people being in control of the person who becomes judge. A small so-called 'Blue Ribbon' group leads to 'elitism' and results in taking away from the people a very important right."

Probate judges, who serve six-year terms on a non-partisan basis, are paid \$35,000 annually.

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