



## CAPITOL REPORT

October 5, 2006

**T**he Michigan Legislature finished its Fall session last week and its 145 sitting members have headed home to prepare for November elections which could drastically re-shape the state's political landscape.

Hanging in the balance is control of the Senate and House for 2007-08 and perhaps much beyond. The current line-up of 22 Republicans, 16 Democrats in the Senate and 58 Republicans, 49 Democrats, 3 vacancies in the House seems certain to change, and the big question is whether Democrats can wrest control of one or both chambers from a long-dominant GOP. We think they have a realistic shot of doing so, and below we provide the details.

Meantime, the contest for Governor – by far the most expensive in state history – only gets hotter. Gov. **Granholtm** leads challenger Dick **DeVos** in virtually every poll but by varying margins. Republican optimists remind their faithful that sixteen years ago John **Engler** consistently trailed then-Gov. Jim **Blanchard** in every poll, but still took the prize on Election Day. Only Secretary of State Terri Lynn **Land** (R) looks totally secure for re-election, although Attorney General Mike **Cox** (R) looks to be fairly safe in his bid for another four year term. U.S. Senator Debbie **Stabenow** has a comfortable lead over Republican Mike **Bouchard**.

As for the state-wide contests for education posts (State Board of Education, MSU Trustee, U of M Board of Regents, Wayne State Governor), Republicans will be lucky to survive with even a single victory despite having a generally well-qualified slate of candidates. For Supreme Court, incumbent justices Michael **Cavanagh** and Maura **Corrigan** are near-certain winners.

Before providing a more in-depth look at the battle for control of the Legislature, here's our take on the "Lame Duck" session which will begin on November 9, just two days after the election:

If Republicans sweep the governorship and the legislature, the session will be short and sweet: GOP'ers will wait until the 2007 Legislature convenes to move along a broad programmatic front. But, in the more likely event that the Governor is re-elected, and probably regardless of who gets legislative control, the lame duck session will linger on to mid-December, with a wide variety of bills receiving late action. We can safely predict, however, that there will be no definitive decisions on replacement of the Single Business Tax. That will be, no matter what, the top issue in the 2007-08 session of the Legislature. It is much too early to know the shape – or even the size – of the replacement tax package and, if history is any guide, it will remain unknowable throughout most of 2007. Who controls the new Legislature will be of utmost importance in putting together this all-important tax puzzle.

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**Control of the Senate:** Republicans have their best chance to hold onto this chamber, but it's not at all certain they will. A loss of just three seats would produce a 19-19 tie that would be broken for organizational purposes by vote of the lieutenant governor. If Gov. Granholm wins re-election, that means Lieutenant Governor John **Cherry** could deliver the upper house to Democrats for the first time in nearly a quarter century. The tightest Senate races are:

20<sup>th</sup> District – Incumbent Sen. Tom **George** (R-Portage) vs. Rep. Alexander **Lipsey** (D-Kalamazoo): This race has vaulted to the top of everyone's "watch" list with word that challenger Lipsey may have surged ahead of the Senate's only physician-lawmaker. The Kalamazoo area has tended more Democratic in recent years and Lipsey is well-regarded. George, however, is now said to be putting his campaign in higher gear and is getting well-organized Lansing support to offset Lipsey's boost from a newly-created Kalamazoo-based PAC created by millionaire Jon Stryker.

13<sup>th</sup> District – Former Rep. John **Pappageorge** (R-Troy) vs. Andy **Levin** (D-Royal Oak): The race is very close to succeed term-limited Sen. Shirley **Johnson** (R). Republicans are coming off a divisive primary and Levin is relying on name recognition from his father, U.S. Congressman Sander Levin, and uncle, U.S. Senator Carl Levin.

32<sup>nd</sup> District – Rep. Roger **Kahn** (R-Saginaw) vs. Rep. Carl **Williams** (D-Saginaw): The House's only physician-lawmaker seeks to move to the Senate in a district that has a strong Democratic base. Given the possibility of this being a big Dem year, it would seem that Dr. Kahn would have a very hard road, yet most insiders believe he has the edge on Williams who draws his greatest strength from inner-city Saginaw. If this seat switches to the Democrats, Republican control of the Senate will be in dire jeopardy.

17<sup>th</sup> District – Former Rep. Randy **Richardville** (R-Monroe) vs. Bob **Schockman** (D-Temperance): This is now a Republican-held seat being vacated by term limited Sen. Bev Hammerstrom. Richardville is the strongest candidate the GOP could have fielded, yet he is being hard pressed by Schockman, a triathlon competitor. In a normal year, Richardville would probably be safe but this one looks now to be in doubt, and the Dem challenger is reportedly working hard.

34<sup>th</sup> District – Sen. Gerald **Van Woerkom** (R-Muskegon) vs. former Rep. Julie **Dennis** (D-Muskegon): Every time he has run, twice for the House and once before for the Senate, Van Woerkom has given his supporters heart failure before squeaking out a razor-thin victory. Republicans hope things don't change even though – again – a bad GOP year could sink the incumbent. Dennis has so far not done as well as many Dem observers had hoped.

6<sup>th</sup> District – Sen. Laura **Toy** (R-Livonia) vs. Rep. Glenn **Anderson** (D-Westland): Sen. Toy is popular and well-known, but the late-starting Democrat appears to have put together a good campaign team. Toy has the edge.

25<sup>th</sup> District and 7<sup>th</sup> District – Sen. Jud **Gilbert** (R-Algonac) vs. Gary **Orr** (D-Marysville) and Sen. Bruce **Patterson** (R-Canton) vs. Mark **Slavens** (D-Plymouth): These should be easy Republican wins but, again, with so many negative trends, the GOP has reason to be nervous.

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**Control of the House:** More than most Lansing observers, we think control of the House is very much in play. Democrats have only to pick up four seats to get a majority and if top-of-the-ticket trends are highly unfavorable for Republicans, it could happen. Here are the closest races, as we see them:

91<sup>st</sup> District – Rep. David **Farhat** (R-Muskegon) vs. Mary **Valentine** (D-Muskegon): The incumbent has been beset by a spate of local bad publicity and has had to go on the attack against his unknown opponent, an unusual tactic. He had been slated to hold a key position in the next Legislature, so the outcome here is being closely watched.

56<sup>th</sup> District – John **Manor** (R-Monroe) vs. Kate **Ebli** (D-Monroe): This the one House seat that could shift from Democratic to Republican. The seat is currently vacant but was represented by a Dem who died in office earlier this year. The race is close, the Dem candidate is attractive, but the GOP has a reasonable chance for a win.

75<sup>th</sup> District – Tim **Doyle** (R-Grand Rapids) vs. Robert **Dean** (D-Grand Rapids): Dems have a chance to win this, but a strong Doyle campaign and Dean baggage are likely to keep this seat in Republican ranks.

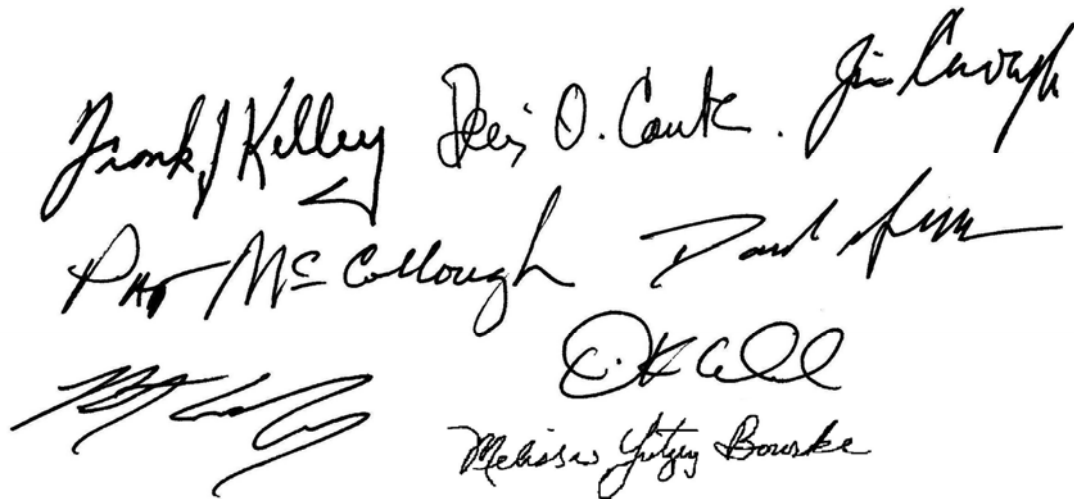
64<sup>th</sup> District and 65<sup>th</sup> District – Rep. Rick **Baxter** (R-Hanover) vs. Martin **Griffin** (D-Jackson), and Rep. Leslie **Mortimer** (R-Horton) vs. Mike **Simpson** (D-Jackson): Both of these Jackson County races are a re-match of 2004, except that this time Baxter and Mortimer have the incumbent's advantage. Still, Griffin is very much in this race and Simpson certainly has a shot.

38<sup>th</sup> District – Rep. David **Law** (R-Commerce Twp.) vs. Lisa **Brown** (D-West Bloomfield): This Oakland County seat could be ripe for an upset by Democrat Brown capitalizing on the "life" and other issues.

94<sup>th</sup> District – Ken **Horn** (R-Frankenmuth) vs. Bob **Blaine** (D-Saginaw): This is a long-shot for Dems, and a win here would go a long way toward producing a Dem House majority.

In a number of other districts that should be highly competitive or be held by the opposition party, incumbents are far ahead: They include: Reps. Gary **McDowell** (D-Rudyard); John **Espinoza** (D-Croswell); Doug **Spade** (D-Tipton); Joel **Sheltrown** (D-West Branch); and Tim **Moore** (R-Farwell)...However, it is also our experience over the years that there is always at least one legislative upset that no one saw coming.

The K-16 ballot proposal (Prop 5), to provide minimum funding for public education, has a host of opponents including most newspaper editorial writers. We think opponents may be too optimistic that they can win without a major “no” vote campaign in the paid media. It’s not inconceivable that the measure could yet slip through.



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