

INSIDE MICHIGAN POLITICS

Inside: News & Views

Michigan Democrats Choose Fall Slate
They Said It

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MICHIGAN DEMOCRATS CONVENE: CARL LEVIN BLISTERS McCain; GRANHOLM BLAMES ALL OF MICHIGAN'S PROBLEMS ON BUSH, GOP

What was most conspicuous about the speeches delivered by Gov. **Jennifer Granholm** and U.S. Senator **Carl Levin** at Michigan Democrats' fall nominating convention in Lansing Sept. 6 was what they *didn't* say:

■ Granholm never alluded — not even in a phrase or half-sentence — to the downfall of Detroit Mayor **Kwame Kilpatrick** just two days earlier, even though she played a prominent role in Hizzoner's final collapse; and

■ Levin never referred to the fact that he's actually running for re-election this year and has a Republican opponent, whose name he of course did not mention.

In fact, Levin's entire speech was devoted to eviscerating his longtime Republican colleague in the Senate, **John McCain**. So much for the "new politics" of Levin's preferred presidential nominee, **Barack Obama**, who has decried the bitter partisanship that the Illinois lawmaker has argued must become a thing of the past. Maybe Levin looked at Obama's faltering Michigan poll numbers and decided Obama's campaign needed a shot of the 'ol time religion."

Few in Michigan actually listen to, much less record, political speechifying at state party conventions anymore. That's too bad, because the pols' remarks on such occasions usually reveal more about them than anything else they say or do at any other time. Granholm, for example, can give full throat to her grievances against the enemy she's evidently convinced herself is responsible for her largely miserable tenure as governor. Levin, in his disarmingly rumped, avuncular manner, invariably performs a masterly hatchet job on the GOP and its elected officeholders.

But don't take **IMP's** word for it — read (and listen) for yourself:

Granholm: ... This is our moment, Michigan, as Democrats! Did you see, yesterday, the national job report? ... The worst job report in five years! ... Do you know what category of jobs represented the largest job losses? Manufacturing, automotive, automotive supplies! Who gets hurt most by that? It's us. Again! Now, did you see, yesterday, the Republican ticket in Sterling Heights? ... So here we have John McCain, who has, we know ... proudly voted with **George Bush** and his policies 90% of the time. There (McCain and **Sarah Palin**) are in Sterling Heights, running away from being Republicans! ... I don't know about you, but I don't wanna take a mere 10% chance that there's gonna be change. I wanna 100% chance for change! And no other state needs it more than Michigan ... So, here they are, these two candidates, and they claim that ...



Obama

they're actually not Republicans — they're mavericks, they're reformers. Now, if you read between the lines, that means they don't want to be associated with George Bush. And that explains why they're running away... Their theme is "A change is gonna come." But what is that change? McCain said in his acceptance speech ... (that) he's gonna "put the country back on the road to prosperity and peace." Back on the road! Well, we already know that it hasn't been on the road to prosperity and peace over the last eight years, and, the last time it was, a Democrat was in the White House! ... At their convention, (the Republicans) were so happy that George Bush didn't come ... They heaved a big sigh of relief! No George Bush, no **Dick Cheney** — whoo-oo-oo-oo! They might be able to fool the American people into thinking they're different. They were afraid that they were going to walk away from that convention in Minnesota and have George Bush and John McCain be known as the 'Minnesota Twins.' Truth be told, if I were them, I'd run away, too! ... They're trying to put on this mask of being non-traditional Republicans. So ... let's see how different they are from the Bush administration ... Do these candidates want, for example, to negotiate trade agreements to level the playing field and keep jobs in this country? No! They're unrepentant traders, free traders — same as George Bush ... Do they want to provide health care for all of our citizens? No! They're the same as George Bush. Do they want to provide tax cuts for the middle class? — No! They want tax cuts for the wealthy, just like George Bush. Do they want to stop the big tax giveaways to the oil companies? No! Same thing as George Bush. Do they want to appoint a Supreme Court that would respect a woman's reproductive right to privacy? ... No! Do they want to support an equal pay for equal work policy? No, same as the Bush administration ... I'm telling you, we don't want four more years of the same thing... If people were going to vote their pocketbooks, their interests, this wouldn't even be a question. That's why the Republicans were trying to fool people; they want to put on a mask of not being traditional Republicans ... But we are the state where all of this comes together ... we are the state that they must win. We are the state that is on the front lines, and you are the ones that are going to bring about change for this nation ... We have 30 days from today to register people to vote ... we must register at unprecedented levels... And we have 59 days to turn out people in record numbers ... to persuade people to vote for hope, for change, for jobs, for a healthy economy, for health care ... for early childhood education, 59 days for renewable energy ... 59 days to elect Barack Obama ... Let's get 'er done!

Carl Levin: ... Witnessing Barack Obama's historic speech accepting our party's nomination to be president last week, I could feel the electricity in the crowd and the fervent hope produced by his words. It reminded me of one of the first campaigns that I ever took part in, the 1960 campaign of **John Kennedy**. The Republican Party is offering a candidate for president touting his experience. Well, I think we ought to give it to the Republicans that George Bush and Vice President Dick Cheney and John McCain do have a lot of experience—their experience of running our national debt up to \$10 trillion for our children and grandchildren. Their experience of sitting idly by while three million manufacturing jobs leave the country. Oh, their experience of trying to privatize Social Security and turn it from a safety net into a slot machine. Oh, they've experienced all right! Their experience of supporting NAFTA, which turned a trade surplus with Mexico into a \$75 billion trade deficit ... Their experience of getting us into a war with no plan of getting us out. Their experience in keeping us there and costing us \$11 billion a month. Their experience in paying our taxpayers' dollars to reconstruct Iraq while the Iraqi government is sitting on an \$8 billion surplus in oil revenues, much of which comes from our pockets while we're paying \$4 a gallon for gas and, as John McCain proudly puts it, these are his words: "Nobody has supported President Bush more than (he has)." So, folks, after eight years of that kind of experience we cannot afford four more years. John McCain takes a different view of the eight years of the Bush administration — he insists that Americans are "overall better off" than they were eight years ago. And that we have a prosperous economy with low unemployment, low inflation, (and) a lot of good things have been happening. That's John McCain. That's the real John McCain! Well, I don't know where John McCain has been for the last eight years, but he sure as heck has not been in Michigan. How else could John McCain vote as he did to cut funding for the advanced technology program that helps U.S. manufacturing develop new technologies to better compete in a global economy? How else, if he had been in Michigan, could John McCain fight against the minimum wage increases that we tried to get over and over again? How else could John McCain repeatedly vote against renewable energy even while he supports \$4 billion more in tax breaks for the oil industry?... How else could John McCain support the Bush veto of a bill to expand the Children's Health Insurance program? ... How else can he now support making permanent the Bush tax cuts for the wealthiest of us when he voted against those same tax cuts seven years ago when they were adopted? ... But because of those Bush-McCain policies and others, the income of the average family in Michigan and the United States is significantly lower than it was eight years ago. But, believe it or not, John McCain recently said that America is "making great progress economically" —that's why last year John McCain voted with George Bush in the U.S. Senate 95% of the time. Now, I want to repeat this, because John McCain is now trying to run away from George Bush ... because 95% is a higher percentage than any other Senator. We cannot let John McCain get away with this subterfuge. Our job #1 this November is to elect Barack Obama and **Joe Biden** as President and Vice President ... Because we need their support for government loans to help our auto industry retool just the way other governments support their auto industries ... We need major investments in alternative energy

sources to help us to become energy independent. We need Barack Obama in the White House — we need affordable health care and good schools and affordable education. We need Barack Obama in the White House. And we need — and never let us forget this — we need to end our open-ended commitment in Iraq and make the Iraqis responsible for their own country. We need Barack Obama in the White House. There are many other reasons, but let me focus on just one of them ... I visited a veterans hospital last year in Ann Arbor, and I asked a Korean War veteran who was lying in his bed, "What can we do to help you?" And this is what he said: "Win back the respect of people around the world for America." When Barack Obama went to Germany, he was greeted by 250,000 people waving American flags — unlike George Bush, who was greeted by thousands of protesters. It should have made and did make much of our nation proud and more confident of our future security in this world. But John McCain has made fun of that outpouring of support and has mocked the outpouring of pro-American feeling that was shown to a candidate for President of the United States. God willing, Barack Obama will be our President and will be able to command the respect of hundreds of thousands and millions and billions of people around the world ... That TV commercial of John McCain heaping scorn on Barack Obama for the respect shown to him by hundreds of thousands of people around the world shows us clearly that this election is going to be a test, and the test is whether we as a nation are going to push forward to new heights, get our country back on track and once again be the beacon of hope that the world deserves ... We must end the Bush policies supported by John McCain — isolated from our allies, isolated from the world's leaders ... We must become part of the world again — our security depends upon it. At their convention in Minnesota, the Republicans finally realized that our country hungered for change here at home and abroad. The same people, including **Karl Rove**, who brought George Bush and Dick Cheney to the White House, are now trying to persuade the American people that John McCain is an agent of change. They're the same people, including John McCain, who supported the Bush-Cheney policies that led to high unemployment, open-ended conflict in Iraq, record debt, lower taxes for the wealthy, and economic stagnation and decline for most of us. They're the same people! ... John McCain made a promise last Thursday that 'Change is coming to Washington' ... and I believe and I know that we are going to dedicate ourselves to helping John McCain make good on that promise by electing Barack Obama as president of the United States! Thank you, and thank you for our support!"

NEWS & VIEWS: SPEAKER ANDY DILLON RECALL BACK ON FRONT BURNER; IMPACT OF TWO NATIONAL PARTY CONVENTIONS (& SARAH PALIN); KWAME KILPATRICK KAPUT; 'GANG OF FOUR' DEEP-SIXES RMGN, OUSTS JUDICIAL CHALLENGER FROM BALLOT

NEWS: A surprise ruling two weeks ago by federal judge **Robert Holmes Bell** has revived the possible recall of House Speaker **Andy Dillon** (D-Redford) after everyone thought such a prospect was dead. Bell ruled that signa-

tures collected by circulators who didn't live in the 17th House district that had been tossed out were in fact valid and should have been counted. The U.S. Court of Appeals' 6th circuit has refused to intervene, so it appears certain a proposal to recall Dillon will be on the ballot in the Wayne Co. enclave, alongside the Dillon re-election effort against Republican small businesswoman **Sandra Eggers**, who helped organize the Dillon recall. What are the ramifications of this weird scenario?

VIEWS: Could Dillon be recalled and re-elected at the same time? Sure, although it's unlikely. If those twin results happened, he'd be out as Speaker soon after the votes were certified, but he could participate in anything that went on in Lansing during the last seven weeks of the year in an "unofficial" capacity. His Democratic caucus would undoubtedly rally around him in sympathy, in a sort of "there but for he go I" spirit. Then they'll re-elect him Speaker for the next two years during his final term. Any other result on 11/4 answers itself.

NEWS: Democrats in Denver seemingly patched up the differences between **Barack Obama** and the Clintons and nominated Delaware Senator **Joe Biden** for VP, then Obama gave a great speech in a jam-packed outdoor football stadium; Republicans in the Twin Cities got off to a slow start because of Hurricane Gustav but finished strongly with Alaska Gov. **Sarah Palin's** VP nomination acceptance speech and a record-viewership closing night oration by **John McCain**. How is all that playing out in Michigan?

VIEWS: It's difficult to disagree with the conventional wisdom that the pick of Palin as a runningmate was a brilliant tactical move by McCain — it stepped all over the 'bounce' that the Democrats were supposed to get from their conclave that closed the previous night. But, strategically, the jury is still out on whether Palin is a *boffo* pick. Yes, she's plainly energized the GOP base, but that may also prove to be a problem with ticket-splitters — especially if the 'Troopergate' investigation yields bitter fruit, or if any other 'problems' about Palin reveal that Team McCain didn't do a good enough job of 'vetting' their nominee. Still, a Public Policy Polling survey (Sept. 6-7) here in Michigan reveals that Palin has done more to help McCain than has Biden to aid Obama.

NEWS: Finally! Detroit Mayor **Kwame Kilpatrick** ended a nearly nine-month soap opera by copping a plea that will, among other things, force him from office on Sept. 18 as a result of the 'text-messaging' scandal. Kilpatrick's ouster was expedited by Gov. **Jennifer Granholm's** one-day hearing in Detroit on whether Hizzoner was fit to serve, with the likelihood that she'd boot him if she felt he wasn't. Where does all this leave Motown and the rest of Michigan?

VIEWS: For starters, Granholm's role in KK's resignation may give her a mild uptick in approval among Michigan voters in the short term, but who cares? She's a lame duck. In the long term, she's more likely to be resented by Detroiters who realize that she tried to throw out a mayor they'd elected (and who was never convicted of any wrongdoing) when, scandal notwithstanding, most observers believed he was a better mayor than she was a governor. As for the future, is Detroit likely to truly 'move forward'? Of course not. The city and, especially, its school system are in a downward spiral. The acting mayor and the city council will now embroil themselves

in whether there should be a special election to choose Kilpatrick's replacement, or whether they should let **Ken Cockrel, Jr.**, serve out the balance of KK's term and then elect a new leader for four years in November, 2009. The city council is a disaster — half of it is under investigation by the FBI, and its president (**Monica Conyers**, wife of the Congressman), who has dubbed Cockrel "Shrek," is an accident that has already happened.

NEWS: As expected, the Michigan Supreme Court upheld an appellate ruling that the Reform Michigan Government Now petition effort doesn't qualify for the general election. Almost simultaneously, in a stunning, 4-3 decision, the Supremes reversed the Court of Appeals and opined that Tawas City attorney **Christopher P. Martin's** name cannot appear on the 11/4 ballot in a race for two seats in the four-county 23rd Circuit Court. The high bench's decision has been reviled in legal and judicial circles; the big question seems to be: how could the 'Gang of Four' have blown this one?

VIEWS: The only question about RMGN was whether the 'Gang of Four' could draw their renegade colleague, **Betty Weaver**, and a Democrat to join them in euthanizing organized labor's attempt to rewrite the Constitution. They did — Weaver and **Mike Cavanagh** crossed over. As for the 23rd Circuit judgeship abomination, let's start by giving the majority Republicans on the court their due — they claimed to be sticking by their *raison d'être* that they shouldn't 'legislate from the bench,' and neither should anyone else. In other words, what the Legislature writes into law is sacrosanct, and anybody else's "guidance or advice" (including an executive branch bureaucrat's in interpreting what the Legislature has written) doesn't count. Problem is, if the justices had actually read through as many statutes as they claim, they would know that a healthy chunk of state laws are fraught with contradictions and incoherence that cry out for elucidation and plain common sense when they're administered. In this case, a classified civil servant in the Secretary of State's office (+ the Internet) plainly screwed up (but, reading the statute, you can hardly blame them) by telling Martin that the number of signatures the attorney needed to qualify for the ballot was less than the true minimum required. To make matters worse, Martin was told he could not turn in more than the maximum signatures allowed by statute or he'd be charged with a misdemeanor — not the sort of thing a judicial aspirant wants on his record. Before 1999, Martin could have turned in way more signatures than he did (and as he wanted to) without penalty, but in that year the law was changed to stop such a practice. That spelled doom for Martin once he was challenged after the filing deadline by the two incumbent judges who have never been elected in the jurisdiction, **Ronald Bergeron** and **William F. Myles**. Even the SoS's elections division, shamefaced at their blunder, did not contest Martin's right to be on the ballot. Neither did any court till the case reached the Supremes as a result of the incumbents' appeal. Now, as a result of the 'Gang of Four's' pie-eyed decision, citizens in the 23rd are stuck for the next six years with two judges reknowned for their discourtesy to litigants, attorneys, and witnesses, not to mention their sloth (the lightest case loads of the seven judges in the four-county jurisdiction). In brief, in abetting the sitting

judges' efforts at self-protection, the Supremes' four-member majority have made fools of themselves and saddled the 23rd with a pair of incumbents who are more than disrespected — they're despised.

MICHIGAN DEMOCRATS PICK FALL SLATE

The Michigan Democratic Party chose its candidates for the general election in the Lansing Center on Saturday, Sept. 6. In a surprisingly close vote considering that she was endorsed by the party's influential Labor Caucus, Wayne Co. Circuit Judge **Diane Hathaway** emerged as the party's nominee to oppose Republican Chief Justice **Cliff Taylor**. Hathaway, who lost a bid for the state Court of Appeals in 2006, edged a sister Wayne Co. circuit judge, **Deborah Thomas**, who was the party's failed nominee for the high bench in 2004.

Also decided were two nominations apiece for the state's four education boards that are always up for grabs every other year. In most cases, at least partial control of the panel hangs in the balance:

● **State Board of Education.** Democrats now control this panel, 6-2, and that edge can't get any larger because both seats exposed this year are held by Democrats — **John Austin** and **Kathleen Straus**, who led the balloting back in 2000. Both were renominated and will face Republicans **Scott Jenkins** of Williamston, a former **John Engler** education policy aide, and **Richard Zeile**, headmaster of a Lutheran school in Taylor. Democrats could lose their majority on the SBE if there's a GOP sweep that leaves the panel divided, 4-4. If Straus and Austin sweep, the Dems' margin stays the same, 6-2; if the two parties split, the Democratic majority will be whittled to 5-3.

● **MSU/Trustees.** The Dems dumped two-term incumbent **Dorothy Gonzales** and instead nominated former state House Minority Leader **Dianne Byrum** (D-Onondaga) and **Diann Woodard**, a top union official for school administrators. This is the board where the Democratic majority is the slightest, 5-3. It's also the only panel where a Republican incumbent is running for re-election (Birmingham attorney **Scott Romney**, Mitt's brother). If Romney should get knocked off and Dems retain Gonzales's seat, they'll expand their margin to 6-2. If Romney is re-elected, however, and the Republicans also win the other seat with Birmingham businesswoman **Lisa Bouchard**, they'll tie the Democrats in representation on the panel, 4-4. If the two parties split the two seats, Dems will maintain their current 5-3 edge.

● **U/M/Regents.** Democrats control this board, 6-2, and both seats that are at risk this year are held by Dems. One of those incumbents, Detroit attorney **Laurence B. Deitch**, was renominated for a third term, but longtime regent **Rebecca McGowan** was replaced by **Denise Ilitch**, daughter of the pizza baron and Tigers/Red Wings owner. Three weeks ago, the GOP nominated **Susan Brown** of Portage, who ran and lost in 2006, and Ford Motor Co. executive **John LaFond** of Plymouth. The GOP could pull into a 4-4 tie by sweeping both seats on 11/4. If the Dems sweep, they'll keep their current majority by the same margin as today; if the two parties split, the Dems advantage will be reduced to 5-3.

● **WSU/Governors.** Democrats enjoy their most robust majority on this board, 7-1 — but it can't get any larger this year because both seats up are held by Dems. **Paul Massaron** of Southfield was talked into running again, but

the other incumbent, **Jacquelin Washington**, was replaced by longtime state legislative aide **Gary Pollard** of Detroit, an African-American who lost a close race for the Democratic nomination for state rep in the 11th House district last month. Pollard and Massaron will take on Republicans **Danielle Karmanos** of Orchard Lake, wife of the CEO of Compuware, and **Torion Bridges** of Detroit, state Co-Chair of African-Americans for John McCain. The GOP duo can pare the Dems' margin to 6-2 or 5-3 if one or both of them win — but this is the one board where they can't pull the GOP into a tie.

THEY SAID IT

■ "I can think of no greater aggravation as an incumbent candidate than running in a contested election and risking the loss of the job." — *Court of Appeals Judge Peter D. O'Connell*, in his dissent to a majority opinion that allowed Tawas City attorney **Chris Martin's** name to be printed on the general election ballot in the 23rd judicial circuit (Iosco Co. News-Herald, 8/27).

■ "Although it is unfortunate that (Martin) received incorrect guidance (from a state agency), such guidance cannot alter the law of this state ... Such guidance or advice must always be understood as subordinate to the law actually enacted by the elected representatives of the people." — *Supreme Court Justice Steve Markman*, in his majority opinion agreeing with O'Connell and overturning the majority appellate decision (9/4).

■ "The decision of the (Supreme) Court means that no citizen can rely on the published rules and requirements set forth by a state agency." — *Tawas City attorney Chris Martin*, who won at every step of the way in his fight to earn a chance to oppose two unpopular incumbents — until he got to the Supreme Court, where he was done in by the 'Gang of Four' in a disastrous 4-3 decision (Oscoda Press, 9/10).

■ "We're here (because of demands by) the Detroit city Council, half of whom, by the way, are awaiting indictment on far worse charges than they've proffered to you (**Jennifer Granholm**) against the mayor." — *Sharon McPhail*, general counsel for the city of Detroit, in her opening statement to Granholm at a Sept. 3 hearing designed to pressure Detroit Mayor **Kwame Kilpatrick** into resigning, which it did.

■ "Some believe you should remove the mayor because his problems make Michigan look bad. But the truth is, there's a whole lot making Michigan look bad, and it was there long before this mayor took the oath of office, and long before you became the governor..." — *McPhail again*.

■ "What the Republicans are offering America is warmed-over soup that made us sick the first time that we tasted it!" — *U.S. Senator Carl Levin*, at Michigan Democrats' fall state convention in Lansing (9/6).

■ "He was in the forefront of the fight to defend Affirmative Action; he fought to secure Domestic Partner Benefits ..." — *Description of Detroit attorney Larry Deitch* in a campaign brochure paid for by the "Laurence Deitch for Regent Committee" distributed at Michigan Dems' fall state convention on Sept. 6, in the Lansing Center. This language plays well at a Democratic conclave, if not among Michigan voters who approved Proposal 2 banning Affirmative Action in 2006.