

Michigan Politics



By George Weeks

DeVos' Spending Boosts Standing

"I wouldn't be surprised if it went beyond \$100 million."

— Rich Robinson of the Michigan Campaign Finance Network, speculating on total spending for the 2006 governor's race

In their initial election year jousting, it's the bully pulpit of Governor Jennifer Granholm versus the deep pockets of Republican Dick DeVos.

As Granholm blitzed the state last week (including her third Up North trip of the year, following her 2005 October/December trips to above and just below the bridge) to tout her economic and education initiatives, DeVos ran the fourth commercial of his whopping \$2.3 million TV ad campaign that started February 16.

According to station-by-station buys ferreted out by the non-profit watchdog Michigan Campaign Finance Network (MCFN), the unprecedented early spending by DeVos included \$178,000 in the Traverse City/Cadillac/Sault Ste Marie market and \$66,000 in the western Upper Peninsula.

"What can I say?" Granholm responded when I asked her about the astounding DeVos buy. "It is an astounding figure."

His biggest-ever early buy appears to be money well spent for DeVos, who had been trailing Granholm by double digits in polling last year and the first months of 2006. However, in a March 13 to 17 poll of 600 voters conducted by Lansing-based Marketing Resource Group (MRG) for *Inside Michigan Politics* (IMP) newsletter, Granholm's lead narrowed to 43-41. A virtual dead heat.

DeVos' best showing was a 47-31 lead in the northern Lower Peninsula; Granholm led 50-28 in the Upper Peninsula. But geographical sub-samples have a higher error rate than the statistical 4.1 percent plus or minus margin of the full 600 sample. Furthermore, all early polling is iffy because voters have yet to tune in.

I chatted with Granholm about all of this last week at Traverse City's East Junior High, where she stressed to Nancy Fitzpatrick's seventh grade geography class the importance of taking mathematics and science classes. She told the class of a visit she made last year to a high-tech enterprise in Marquette, where a worker lamented his lack of early classes on math. (In a Trojan TV interview with ninth grader Dayton Stone, she fessed up that "I hated math" as a student.)

But back to politics: Any governor's election-year visit to any school is not just about education. After rapping with students, Granholm devoted about the same amount of time to a series of pre-arranged interviews in East Junior High's library with three local TV outlets.

"People aren't paying attention," Granholm said when I asked when she would start her own TV ads. People may not be paying attention to the campaign, but they're aware of Michigan's economic grief that will be a campaign issue.

IMP newsletter said "a staggering 75 percent believe 'things have gotten pretty seriously off on the wrong track' in Michigan." MRG pollster Paul King says that's as bad as it has been in state polling.

But is the answer to Michigan's woes businessman DeVos, former president of Amway/Alticor who is touted in his ads as a turnaround leader?

I thought his best ad was the one that called him "a make-it-happen guy" and said "Grand Rapids has turned around primarily because of people like Dick DeVos."

That's a legitimate pitch, especially considering that in 1991 he organized a Grand Vision committee that built on efforts by people like his father, Amway co-founder Rich DeVos. But it was a stretch for the ad to assert Dick DeVos "has put the energy back in downtown Grand Rapids."

As the *Grand Rapids Press* headlined atop its front page Friday: "Visionary or Revisionist? Dick DeVos a major player, but some say ad goes too far."

As for the claim on his campaign Web site that "Dick turned Grand Rapids around," his hometown paper reported: "DeVos chuckled and called that 'a little political license.'"

It's not the first or last political license to be played in Campaign 06.

Miffed Lawmakers

Senator Jason Allen (R-Traverse City) showed up at Granholm's junior high gig and she noted his presence. Yet Allen joined Representative Howard Walker (R-Traverse City) in a subsequent letter to Granholm "to express our disappointment" that her office failed to officially advise them in advance of her visit that promoted passage of the state's new mathematics and other high school graduation requirements.

They fussed, "We are forced to conclude that you are more interested in political maneuvering as opposed to appropriately sharing in this achievement..."

George Weeks recently retired after 22 years as political columnist for The Detroit News. His weekly Michigan Politics column is syndicated by Superior Features.

Committee Clarifies Fire Inspection Plans

By Karen Gould

Addressing concerns voiced last week by business owners, who thought a new ordinance regarding fire safety inspections would lead to costly building upgrades, the Mackinac Island Ordinance Committee took another look at the proposed regulation April 5. Committee members agreed to make changes to the rental housing inspection and licensing ordinance, will ask city council to adopt an inspection list, and turned the information over to the city attorney, who agreed to make the changes to the ordinance before it is scheduled to be brought back to council for a vote Wednesday, April 12.

The primary reason for the ordinance is to promote life safety and fire prevention, say committee members. It will also keep insurance costs down.

Changes will include a general purpose statement that will explain the overall scope of the inspection and that the inspection will be based on an approved checklist, adopted at the same time the ordinance is adopted, the committee decided. The committee also agreed the inspection will remain open-ended to address violations not specifically listed on the checklist.

Committee Chairman Mike Hart explained that owners of housing units are concerned that the inspection would cover all codes and that the city would require buildings to be brought up to the latest building codes.

Dennis Dombroski, city building inspector, explained that rental units already were inspected for building code compliance during their construction, remodeling, or change of use.

Fire Chief Dennis Bradley reminded everyone that he already is empowered to inspect buildings for fire safety.

"I don't need this ordinance to do that," he said. "That's not what this one's about."

He explained that this ordinance is for rental housing and is just as much for the owner's protection as it is for the protection of the city, visitors, and employees.

"All people are looking for is a little more focus," said Councilman Armin Porter, who attended the meeting.

Police Chief Bill Lenaghan, a former fire marshal, handed

out an inspection list similar to one he had used as a fire marshal and committee members agreed the list would be helpful and also could serve as a report of the inspection. They asked City Attorney Tom Evashevski to set up a formal list that inspectors could work with during inspections.

The committee also discussed mailing out the inspection list to businesses a week or two before an inspection takes place to let owners know the scope of the inspection and what areas specifically would be addressed. The inspection form provides additional leeway for inspectors, in case they find unanticipated situations.

Mr. Bradley said he came across a metal bed wrapped in Christmas lights last year, which left the occupant susceptible to electrocution.

The inspection form will provide for fire safety inspection of the exterior, interior, electrical, and heating and cooling system. Exterior inspection would include examining exits for obstruction, protection of utilities, and outside storage. The interior inspection also lists exit obstruction, lighting and existence of exit signs, stairway obstruction, and would include checking for smoke detectors and their locations. Electrical

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Historic Parks Ready To Open

The booming cannon, the ringing of rifle shots, and the rallying call of bugles again will be heard across Mackinac Island as Fort Mackinac opens for the season Friday, May 5.

Mackinac Island's lilac queen, Blisse Beardsley, officially opens the fort at the South Sally Port at 9 a.m. She and Phil Porter, director of Mackinac State Historic Parks, will welcome visitors, who can tour the fort and experience the new military medicine exhibit, which offers interactive displays and a special children's section.

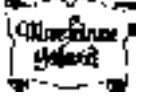
Fort Mackinac will be open from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. through June 9, and longer as the summer unfolds.

Colonial Michilimackinac and Historic Mill Creek in Mackinaw City will open May 3, with hours from 9 a.m. to 4

p.m. through June 9, and longer after that.

Old Mackinac Point Light-house near Fort Michilimackinac will open May 15 and the Island's historic downtown buildings, Dr. Beaumont Museum, Biddle House, Blacksmith Shop, McGuipin House, and Mission Church will open June 10.

Admission to each historic site is \$9.50 for adults and \$6 for children ages 6 to 17 years old. A triple choice ticket also is available which offers three, one-day passes, with visitors choosing three sites to visit at a cost of \$20 for adults, and children \$12.50 for ages 6 to 17. A Mackinac Associates membership/seasonal pass is available for \$59 dollars and includes two adult season passes and entrance for children and grandchildren.



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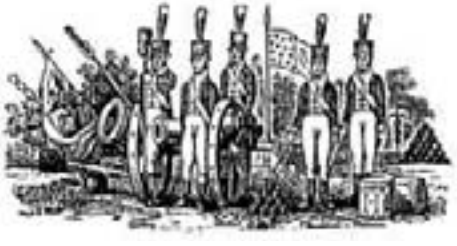
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