

Michigan Politics

By George Weeks



Candidates Migrate North in Spring

Michigan's two top Republican statewide officeholders are stumping for different candidates in what has become an increasingly spirited primary to pick the November 7 challenger of U.S. Senator Debbie Stabenow.

Last year, Attorney General Mike Cox endorsed the Reverend Keith Butler, a former Detroit councilman, and helped in his announcement tour back when Butler was the early favorite in the GOP establishment.

Two months ago, Secretary of State Terri Lynn Land endorsed Oakland County Sheriff Mike Bouchard, a former state senator and representative who entered the race last November after earlier saying he would not run for health reasons that he says have been resolved. She has been trumpeting him in mailings and at party events.

Land, who scheduled an official trip to the Upper Peninsula this week, also planned to be at some Lincoln Day dinners with Bouchard on his first campaign swing above the bridge. He scheduled political events Wednesday in Escanaba and Watersmeet (with Iron, Gogebic, and Ontonagan county Republicans), Thursday in Houghton and Marquette, and Friday in Sault Ste. Marie.

In this election year, it's not hard for northern Republicans to get downstate GOP officials and candidates as dinner speakers for Lincoln Day – which is any day around this time of year a local party can draw a crowd to honor Abraham Lincoln, who was born in February 1809 and assassinated in April 1865.

Last week, Butler made several such dinners on this third trip to the Upper Peninsula, and on Thursday spoke at the Antrim County Lincoln Day event.

Butler on Great Lakes

On his travels, Butler carries copies of his 2006 book, "Reviving the American Spirit: A Strategy of Hope for the 21st Century." The book, as might be expected from the founding pastor of the 21,000-member Southfield-based Word of Faith International Christian Center that has satellite branches in nine states, is heavy on such topics as "how government can legislate morally," and how faith-based organizations can partner with government to help the needy.

Butler also devotes six of the 209 pages to touting protection of the Great Lakes – the strongest statement I've seen from any Republican candidate for statewide office this year.

He said, "It is imperative to hold the line" against drilling under the Great Lakes. While Butler favors drilling in the remote Arctic National Wildlife Refuge in Alaska, he said it cannot be as safely done under the Great Lakes.

He writes: "A lakeshore environment is not resilient. (The) amount of retrievable oil that resides under the Great Lakes is relatively small – definitely not worth the risk to the fresh water, to the ecological balance of the region, and to millions of citizens of Great Lakes states."

Butler also vows to support legislation that prevents ballast water from foreign vessels from being discharged directly into the lakes that already are reeling from invasive species, federal rules to stop polluting runoff, and federal action to open the Yucca Mountain site in Nevada to nuclear waste from Michigan and elsewhere.

Latest Polls

Two polls released last week continue to have Governor Jennifer Granholm in a virtual dead heat race with Republican challenger Dick DeVos, but give Stabenow double-digit leads over GOP contenders.

In polls released last month, Granholm was tied or led by just one or two percentage points. Two independent polls of 600 voters released last week give DeVos a one-percent lead – his first lead as a candidate, but well within the margin of error of plus or minus four percentage points.

A May 1 to May 8 poll by Lansing-based EPIC/MRA had it 46-45 for DeVos. Polling May 1 to May 4 and May 7 to May 9 by Mitchell Research & Communications of East Lansing had it 44-43 for DeVos.

In the EPIC/MRA poll, it was Stabenow 57-29 over Butler, 55-48 over Bouchard, and 57-26 over the Reverend Jerry Zandstra, the third GOP contender, on leave from a Grand Rapids think tank. In its only Senate match up, the Mitchell poll had Stabenow leading Bouchard, 49.5-36.5.

Why just Bouchard? Says pollster Steve Mitchell: "I think he is going to be the nominee."

As it does each month, EPIC/MRA provided results of relatively small geographical sub samples that have a much larger margin of error. Among Michigan's five major media markets, Stabenow had her strongest showing – getting 68 percent of the vote against each GOP candidate – in the Traverse City market (where 34 voters were surveyed in both the Senate and gubernatorial races), which includes the eastern U.P.

Her percentages across the entire Upper Peninsula (16 polled) were 87 against Butler, 76 against Zandstra and 71 percent against Bouchard. She had a

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Out for a drive...

Carriage driver J.R. Reagle is assisted by his dog, Taffey, as they travel up Market Street giving a ride to Don and Bonnie Foltz. Horses Onyx (from left) and Knight pull the carriage. The limited edition vis-a-vis carriage is owned by West Bluff residents Penny and John Barr.



Museum Seeks Site in Mackinaw City for Icebreaker

Mackinaw Museum No Longer Planned for Cheboygan

The Icebreaker Mackinaw Maritime Museum, Inc. has submitted a request to the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to lease a portion of the State Ferry Dock in Mackinaw City as the permanent home of the decommissioned U.S. Coast Guard icebreaker *Mackinaw*.

"This was a very difficult decision to make," said Michelle Hill, museum spokesperson. "We always wanted the ship to stay in its historic home port and continue contributing to the community. We worked really hard to keep it here."

"Having the ship in Cheboygan would have been great for the city," she said, "but, in the long run, we began to see it might not be in the best interests of the ship."

She explained that the only available land on the banks of the Cheboygan River, a parcel known as "The Point," will require costly construction to install a permanent mooring, parking lot, and restroom facility.

"When we added all the costs, we realized it was beyond our budget," Ms. Hill said.

Mooring the icebreaker at the State Ferry Dock in Mackinaw City will save the organization more than \$2 million and still keep it within Cheboygan County.

"This site already has parking, restrooms, and a mooring site," said Ms. Hill. "We will still have to dredge and potentially replace some bollards on the dock, but this will be minor compared with the expense of purchasing the land and building everything from the

ground up."

The group also considered the existing tourist base in Mackinaw City.

"We ran the numbers through our business plan, comparing both sites, considering our anticipated overhead and visitation," Ms. Hill said. "It became pretty clear that locating the boat in Mackinaw City made the most sense."

Captain of the Icebreaker *Mackinaw*, Commander Joseph McGuinness, expressed his support of the group's mission.

"Cheboygan has been the *Mackinaw's* home port its whole life and we recognize that the decision may be difficult for some people to understand, and it was a hard decision for the board to make," he said. "After looking over their numbers, we understand how this decision was reached."

Stephanie Jacobson, chair of the group's fundraising committee said, "Individuals

and businesses in the Cheboygan area have been crucial to our successes, so far. We are grateful for their support and hope they will see that our new mooring site will help us to spend their money in the way that is most beneficial to the ship."

Ms. Hill reported that the group is waiting for final approval from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources for use of the dock site, preparing for the decommissioning, and actively fundraising.

"We are on our way, but we still need financial support to make the museum a reality," Ms. Jacobson said.

Donations can be sent to the group at P.O. Box 8, Cheboygan, Michigan 49721. More information about the project can be found on the group's Web site, www.icebreakermackinawmuseum.org.



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