

Candidates in near-dead heat in 52nd

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Mark Ouimet, the great Republican hope to recapture half of Ann Arbor from two decades of Democratic legislative dominance, has cut himself loose from his president and is sounding like Bill Clinton these days.

Mary Schroer, who for nine years has had the intensely political job of legislative aide to State Sen. Lana Pollack, D-Ann Arbor, is campaigning as the conciliator who can spread balm on the partisan rancor that has poisoned Lansing in recent years.

What gives is simply this:

The newly retooled 52nd State House District - which includes the north half of Ann

Arbor except for downtown, the villages of Chelsea and Dexter, and Ann Arbor, Scio, Freedom, Sharon, Lyndon, Dexter, Webster and Northfield townships - is the closest venue to a political dead heat in the state.

- the purest reflection of partisan identification since almost no one knows the candidates - the district is 50.3 percent Republican and 49.7 percent Democratic.

Schroer said that, since each party can claim about a third of the voters as hard-core partisans, the war between her and Ouimet is being fought for the moderate middle - a group that tilted against George Bush in 1988 and against John Engler in 1990.

"Do I have to run ahead of Bush in the district to win? Oh, yeah," said Ouimet, whose door-to-door campaign is aimed in part at convincing independent and nominally Democratic voters how moderate he is on the issues.

"I was speaking with a labor union guy this morning," Ouimet said in a recent interview. "The guy said, 'You sound like Bill Clinton.' Well, I do feel it is time for a change."

For the Ann Arbor half of the the 52nd, the change will be from Democratic State Rep. Perry Bullard, who is chair of the powerful House Judiciary Committee and has been generally regarded as the House's most liberal member. He is giving up after

STATE HOUSE 52ND DISTRICT

Name: Mark Ouimet
Age: 43
Party: Republican
Occupation: Vice president, Great Lakes Bancorp.



Name: Mary Schroer
Age: 45
Party: Democratic
Occupation: Legislative assistant to State Sen. Lana Pollack (on leave)



Based on State Board of Education votes

See 52ND, C3

52ND.

Candidates woo moderates

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two decades in the Legislature's lower chamber to run for 15th District Court in Ann Arbor.

The would-be successors to the northern half of his district, however, have both been gravitating toward the political middle, and the differences between them on a number of scores are less profound than the similarities.

For example:

■ Both Schroer and Ouimet favor property tax roll backs on the order of about 30 percent. She would replace the lost revenues with a comparable hike in the income tax while he would favor a boost in the state sales tax. Schroer is opposed to Engler's cut-and-cap ballot proposal because she fears it would damage the schools. Ouimet says he fears it will hurt the schools if the state economy remains stagnant but has not decided how he will vote on the issue.

■ Both candidates say they favor abortion rights as permitted in the U.S. Supreme Court Roe v. Wade decision, oppose legislative restriction and would support Medicaid-funded abortions.

■ Both of the candidates say they expect to raise and spend in the neighborhood of \$100,000 in contest targeted by both state parties. Schroer's campaign expense filings show contributions of \$5,000 each from the political action committees of the Michigan Education Association, United Auto Workers, Michigan Trial Lawyers and Our Choice - an abortion rights fund headed by Pollack. Ouimet said he is relying on local monied Republicans.

■ Ouimet, a two-term Ann Arbor city councilman who concedes he has more to lose from partisan identification than his opponent, stresses that he would bring a businessman-banker's perspective to state issues and would intend to function as an outsider-peacemaker in Lansing

"We need partnerships to be successful, not barn dances and bickering and political infighting... we've got to put everybody on the same side of the desk," he said.

Schroer said her insider status will be an asset in helping a largely dysfunctional government do a better job of delivering services to people, adding:

"I do believe in working with friends in the legislative process, in forming coalitions. But I don't like what's going on in the House. It's become so partisan, more partisan in the last two years than I've ever seen it.

"It started in the last term of Blanchard, and now you can't accomplish what needs to be done. We've got to get out of this mess, and the way to do it is to elect someone who can work from the inside to change it."

There is one inarguable difference between the candidates.

Schroer said that, if elected, she will help organize and join a women's caucus in the House.

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