

Incumbent Gary McDowell Faces Challenger Alex Strobehn for 107th District Seat

By John S. DeMott

Two-term Michigan Representative Gary McDowell, 56, a Democrat from Ruydard, is opposed in his bid for reelection to the 107th District office by Republican Alex Strobehn, 21, of Sault Ste. Marie, a student at Lake Superior State University.

"It's not going to be easy for him," Mr. Strobehn said of Mr. McDowell. "I've now knocked on 3,900 doors. I introduce myself and give them a piece of literature. Ninety five percent of the people are open to me."

Mr. Strobehn, not surprisingly, is majoring in political science. If he wins, he intends to complete his

degree by taking night classes at Michigan State University.

"It shouldn't interfere with my public duties at all," he said.

This is his ninth political campaign. He got his start in practical politics as an intern in Dick DeVos' unsuccessful 2006 campaign to unseat Governor Jennifer Granholm.

He describes himself as a conservative, but admires Franklin Roosevelt.

"You need a little bit of free market, a little bit of socialism. That's where we are right now in this country," he said.

Mr. Strobehn, in his deep, assertive voice, says his principal

strategy is looking for paradigms – new and revolutionary products and processes and ways of thinking – to put Michigan back on a growth path.

"We don't need another auto industry," he said. "I want to see new manufacturing open in the state, businesses built on the new and innovative. I want to see clean factories up here. I see paradise here. I don't want to ruin it."

Right now, he claims the Michigan business tax system is discouraging new businesses here, whereas "they're opening in Wisconsin, Ohio, and everywhere else. Our taxes are higher than the states around us."

Indeed, one of his main solutions for everything that ails Michigan is to cut taxes.

Gary McDowell

The incumbent, Mr. McDowell has spent nearly four years in Lansing, and under Michigan's term limit law, this will be his last and final term, if he wins. The term limit hampers the work of the legislature, he says.

"It has really hurt this state," Mr. McDowell said of term limits. "You have constant turnaround. Your leadership is just as inexperienced as every other member. There's no other job where after six years experience, you have to leave."

A United Parcel Service (UPS) driver for 33 years until he retired in 2003, he is married to Carrie and has three adult daughters and one grandson. He and his brothers run a 1,000-acre hay farming operation near Rudyard. He was a

member of the Chippewa County Board of Commissioners for 22 years before running for the legislature.

His most recent project has been pushing for construction of an ethanol plant here, which was announced in October. It will be built in Kinross by Mascoma Corporation of Massachusetts, providing a \$250 million manufacturing plant that will provide 50 direct jobs and hundreds of spin-off jobs in the U.P. in related industries. The plant will produce 40 million gallons of fuel a year.

Michigan put the world on wheels, he says. "Now, why can't it lead the way in renewable alternative energy?"

As chairman of the House Appropriations subcommittee on community health, he oversees spending of some \$13 billion, the largest single part of the Michigan non-education budget, on such

items as Medicaid and care of the elderly. His biggest current committee project is crafting legislation to provide primary care, chronic disease management, and prescription drugs to low-income people.

He's also worked on legislation to protect the Great Lakes and Michigan trout streams. Mr. McDowell recently appealed to the Mackinac Bridge Authority to consider setting a lower minimum price on bridge commuter cards, and introduced legislation to allow the bridge to self-insure. He advocates more state spending to advertise Michigan as a travel destination.

"We've got it all," Mr. McDowell said. "Now we have to tell people about it."

The 107th House district covers the counties of Mackinac, Chippewa, and Emmet and two townships in Cheboygan County.

Gibson, North Race for District Court Bench

By John S. DeMott

Beth Ann Gibson and Thomas B. North seek the post of 92nd District Court judge in the November 4 election.

Judge Gibson, 41, of Newberry, is the incumbent, having won the seat in 2004, defeating gubernatorial appointee Barbara Brown to complete the term of Steven Ford. Ms. Gibson now is running for a full six-year term on that bench, which covers Mackinac and Luce counties.

She is opposed by Mr. North, 52, of St. Ignace, who was a probate judge for 14 years before being defeated for that post in the 2006 election by W. Clayton Graham, then Mackinac County's prosecutor.

Both candidates can be characterized as appealing to conservatives. Ms. Gibson, for example, has been endorsed by Right to Life of Michigan. Mr. North describes himself as a "strict constructionist," meaning, he said, "I very strongly adhere to the idea that creation of law is the province of the legislature, and I'm not going to do it." A member of Right to Life, Mr. North points out his participation and support of more than 100 local and state organizations and programs.

Judge Gibson, a single mother of 11-year-old Robbie, is a graduate of Tahquamenon Area Schools, the University of Michigan, and Thomas Cooley Law School.

She wants another term because "my family has always taught me that public service is not a responsibility, but rather a privilege, and that has been true in all my activities. I've been fortunate to grow up and live and work in our community. I want to put my legal skills and experience to work in our courts,

to help make a real difference in people's lives."

During her 2004 campaign, she made three promises, all of which she says she kept. One of them was making the court more accessible. She sits in St. Ignace three days a week, Newberry for two, but also hears cases in west Mackinac county and on Mackinac Island.

Another was convening court in public schools so students can see the justice system in action, complete with prosecutors and defense attorneys, and ask questions.

The third was being available at almost any time. She says she's signed many warrants at "2 or 3 o'clock in the morning" and is available at all hours, seven days a week, for situations that require her attention.

She's proudest of her program to bring the 92nd District's sobriety court from the planning stages to full operation. The court deals with repeat substance abusers.

"I pulled it off," she said. "I wrote the grants. I pulled the team together. And then we did the training. It was a two-year process."

She also points out that her court is one of only a dozen in Michigan to be chosen for jury reform. Among other changes, the program will let jurors receive printed copies of instructions to them from judges.

"I work hard," she said. "I work excessively hard. But that makes me happy."

Mr. North is from a prominent Michigan political family. His father, Walter North, spent eight years in the Michigan Senate and his grandfather, also Walter, served on the Michigan Supreme Court.

Mr. North lost the election for probate judge by just 102 votes in

2006. He blames his defeat on the anti-incumbent spirit of the day.

He was graduated from Thomas Cooley Law School, Western Michigan University, Lake Superior State University, and St. Ignace LaSalle High School.

He believes his service as a probate judge (he was the youngest in Michigan when he first won election) qualifies him for the district post.

If elected, his operational philosophy would be that the judge is there to serve the public, and not the other way around, Mr. North said.

"Everything you do," he said, "has to be based on unselfish service to the public."

The most important job of a judge, he said, "is to hear and decide cases on a case by case basis in accordance with law. Now, that may not be exciting for the public to listen to, but that's the day to day work."

He would retain most of the changes Judge Gibson oversaw, including sobriety court. He also would innovate wherever appropriate, he said, just as he did when he was a probate judge, doing such things as using tribal revenues from casinos to support foster children.

District court has jurisdiction of civil litigation up to \$25,000 and also handles garnishments, eviction proceedings, land contracts, forfeitures, and other proceedings. For criminal cases, the district court conducts preliminary examinations in felony cases and handles all misdemeanors where punishment does not exceed one year in jail.

The judgeship is a nonpartisan position and all voters in Mackinac and Luce counties can vote for it.

LaSalle Class Building School Garage



One of three LaSalle High School construction classes are building this garage for storage behind the school. The first-hour class includes (from left) Nick Gould, teacher Lynwood Leightner, Rob Grondin, Bob LaDuke, Robert Sayles, Frank Beaudoin, Jeff Gamble, Justin Frazier, Ryan Waldrup, and Jake Gawne.

School Budget Shortfall Better Than Expected

St. Ignace Board Adjusts Projection, Hears Positive Audit

By Karen Gould

St. Ignace Area Schools will be operating in the red this year, although not as much as first projected in June. A revised budget adopted by the school board Monday, October 13, projects a \$176,000 shortfall.

A drop in enrollment of about 25 students from last year will cost the school about \$183,000 in lost revenue.

To cover the deficit, the school will dip into its fund balance (savings account), decreasing that fund to \$439,500, or about 7% of the district's annual operating expense.

Some expenses are expected to be reduced, school business manager Kathy McLeod told the board. Some savings will come now that the school no longer will be paying into the state retirement fund for substitute teachers, as the district is using a third party to provide temporary staff services.

Another area of potential cost reductions could come from health insurance for support staff, as a new plan begins this year.

The board also adopted the audit report for the year ending June 30, 2008.

Projected revenue was \$6.25 million, but that rose to \$6.47 million, while projected expenditures rose from \$6.26 million to an actual \$6.3 million.

"That's telling me you are being extremely conservative with your expenditures," said auditor Ron Harris, president of Harris Group of Traverse City. "This district has always had a very conservative budget and/or spending history. Especially through these economic times, that's very favorable."

"Overall, given the economy in the State of Michigan, I think you do a very good job," he continued.

Auditors found one concern in the student activity cash account. Cash for the student activities fund is held in the same account as the

Athletics Fund, and the funds should be separated, said Mr. Harris. The student activities fund is not the school's money, although the school has a fiduciary responsibility to manage the money.

"To have an account with yours and someone else's money, to me, as an auditor, doesn't make sense," he said.

The funds have now been separated, said Ms. McLeod.

The school had anticipated a drop in enrollment this year of about 30 students, and there are actually 25 fewer students attending class in St. Ignace.

The state's annual student enrollment count on September 24

showed St. Ignace had 682 students, 25 fewer than the count taken last year. The figure is unaudited. Mr. Springsteen attributed the decline to families moving from the area.

The school receives \$7,316 per student in funding.

Based on the September count, the total number of students attending LaSalle High School is 240, said Principal Don Gustafson, a drop of 12 students from last fall. This year, the freshman class has 58 students, sophomores total 66, juniors total 54, and the senior class has 62 students.

Student enrollment at the school has declined since 2004, when 805 students in kindergarten through

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Carmody Runs Unopposed for 11th Circuit Court

Judge William Carmody of Shelter Bay is seeking the bench of 11th Circuit Court in the November 4 election. Unopposed in the race, he will replace retiring Judge Charles Stark.

After being appointed to the Probate Court bench for Alger and Schoolcraft counties, Judge Carmody then completed for two full terms on the probate bench. As current presiding judge of the Family Court division, he is involved in handling all domestic and juvenile matters that come before the court, and all juvenile matters. He handles estates, guardianship, conservatorship adoptions, mental health hearings, and personal protection order requests.

His experience on the bench makes him a good candidate for Circuit Court, Judge Carmody said.

"For the past two years, I have assisted Chief Judge Charles Stark in handling the docket in Mackinac County. This experience has given me a greater insight into the duties of the Chief Judge of the 11th Circuit, such that I am confident I can perform those duties necessary to the efficient and logical management of the docket and related issues in the four counties involved," Judge Carmody said. "As in any business operation, you are always looking to optimize your time and reduce the costs of doing business, at the same time making sure the public is well served by the court system. Having worked in all of the counties within the circuit for more than 20 years, I have a strong familiarity with the operations in each county and the staffs involved, which will assist me in handling a smooth transition into the job."



William Carmody

Funding is a challenge faced by the court in these counties, he said.

"The issues that confront all counties today are simply having to do more with less revenue, so I will continue to try and find ways to reduce those costs where possible and insist on all means of efficiency being explored."

As Circuit Court judge, one of his goals will be providing timely public service, while scheduling a variety of cases for a large geographical area.

"Generally speaking, what the public deserves is to be heard in a timely fashion with decisions made on all files in the shortest amount of time possible," Judge Carmody said. "The courtroom can be a daunting and intimidating situation for people, and it is my duty to make sure that all participants are treated with respect and given the greatest opportunity to be heard. One of my personal goals is to make sure that the time spent in Mackinac County is consistent with the demands of the docket."

A native of the Upper Peninsula, he grew up in Munising, and was graduated from Mather High School in Munising in 1965. He taught school in Manistique from 1969 to 1973 and then went on to earn a master of arts degree in 1973 from Northern Michigan University, followed by a Doctorate in Education in 1976 from Western Michigan University, and a law degree from Thomas Cooley Law School in Lansing in 1983.

He was a consultant with the Department of Education in Lansing from 1977 to 1980, a court-appointed superintendent for Royal Oak Township from 1983 to 1985, and was in private legal practice from 1985 to 2000. Judge Carmody has served on the State Board of Accountancy and was on the Board of Trustees for Western Michigan University from 1997 to 2000 before his appointment to the bench.

Judge Carmody and his wife, Molly Carmody, have a daughter who is a senior at Munising High School. The family lives at Shelter Bay in Alger County.

The 11th Circuit Court serves Mackinac, Luce, Alger, and Schoolcraft counties. It has jurisdiction in civil cases involving more than \$25,000, domestic relations cases, felony criminal cases, and some misdemeanors. It has jurisdiction over appeals from district court, appeals from some administrative agencies, and it superintends the 92nd District Court in Mackinac County. The Family Division of Circuit Court handles family matters that were formerly assigned to the probate court.

All voters in the four counties served by the court may vote for Circuit Court judge.

Masonic Lodge Donates \$500 to DARE



Skip Jarman, secretary of St. Ignace Masonic Lodge 369, presents a \$500 donation to State Police Trooper Fred Strich, Drug Abuse Resistance Education (DARE) officer, Thursday, October 16. The St. Ignace organization, which has been in existence for more than 135 years, supports programs for local children. The group gives three college scholarships each year to a graduating senior from LaSalle High School, participates in the children's event Super Saturday, and supports the child identification program. The funds will be used to purchase DARE supplies, including workbooks and graduation T-shirts.