



Volume 3

OUR MISSION: To protect and enhance the appearance and scenic character of Michigan's communities and countryside.

Spring 1998

### FROM THE PRESIDENT...

In discussions about billboard control, several key phrases recur- "litter on a stick," "billboard blight", "a drive through the Yellow Pages," to name just a few. The billboard industry calls the federal Highway Beautification Act "a law that works." Promoters of scenic conservation believe the Act is a broken law - failing to accomplish its goals.



Mary Lou Tanton, President

The Highway Advertising Act of 1972, Michigan's response to the HBA, was heavily influenced by the billboard industry. Further, lax enforcement and loopholes in these laws have alerted citizens statewide to the critical importance of protecting their community's appearance, livability, and future.

Visually deteriorating roadsides and assaults to the spirit by monstrous billboards have also prompted legislative action. Still being considered are the Scenic Michigan Initiative, legislation to ban tobacco advertising on billboards, and to double the number of logo sign locations from 30 to 60 along our freeways and interstate highways (79% of respondents to a recent poll prefer uniform logo signs instead of billboards). Your concern and support will help restore order and beauty to our communities and roadsides.

Sincerely,

Mary Lou Tanton

### THE LEGISLATIVE FRONT

#### SB 483 & 484 PASSED

Originally introduced by Senator Schwarz in May of 1997, these bills have passed both the Senate and the House. The purpose of these bills is to increase the number of highway interchanges where logo signs can be placed. The Senate version of the bill was going to increase the number from 30 to 100 interchanges. The House voted to only increase the number to 60. The bill has been referred back to the Senate so they can vote on the House amendments. The passage of this bill does look promising.

#### SB 341 PASSED

Introduced by Senator Bennett, this bill is designed to eliminate the advertising of tobacco products on billboards within the state by the year 2000. This bill has passed the Senate and the House committee on Transportation. However, there is some reluctance by House leadership to bring this bill up on the House floor for a vote. Call Speaker of the House Curtis Hertel, (517) 373-1983, and your State Representative and ask SB 341 to be put up for a vote.

#### SB 445 PASSED

The "Scenic Michigan Initiative" has not moved at all since the last newsletter. The only way that this bill will have a chance is if citizens contact Sen. Stille, the bill's sponsor, and their own Senators. Let them know you support them and the bill, and you want to see some action take place. The bill is currently in the Senate Committee on Local, Urban, and State Affairs.

*If your organization is in support of these principles or would like more info, contact Scenic Michigan: (517) 371-1041, ext. 452 or via e-mail at [mucc@mucc.org](mailto:mucc@mucc.org)*

## Paperwork hampers run for state officials

It may have been one of Michigan's shortest-lived races for governor, although officially, Petoskey's John Tanton was never a candidate.

The retired Petoskey ophthalmologist's short-lived candidacy ended with a reality check from the Secretary of State's Bureau of Elections in Lansing one day after he told a state convention he would be their write-in candidate.

Tanton certainly is no stranger to many in this neck of the woods, where he and his wife, Mary Lou, have championed many causes since first moving here to practice medicine at Burns Clinic in 1964.

He helped found the local chapter of Planned Parenthood, the Little Traverse Conservancy and went on to deal with a variety of national issues ranging from population and illegal immigration to establishing English as our official language, to name a few of his interests.

So when I received a Sunday morning call last month that he had decided to be a write-in candidate for governor on Michigan's Reform Party ticket, his pronouncement came as no surprise.

He's one of the few people I've known over the years that not only talks about concerns and problems in this country, but actually sets out to make a change. Running for governor followed a similar pattern.

Unfortunately, after the weekend convention, a Monday morning visit to the Lansing Secretary of State's office caused him to alter his course — at least for this election.

He was first given a 2-inch thick manual of rules and regulations governing the governor's campaign and also learned that running as a write-in candidate was no easy

task. Michigan has 12 different ways of voting, ranging from the old fashion paper ballot to electronic ballot booths.

Petoskey is also no stranger to hosting candidates for statewide office, as former resident Paul Brown ran unsuccessfully as lieutenant governor on a Democrat ticket with U.S. Rep. Sander Levin for governor in the early '70s.

Former State Sen. Tom Schweigert of Petoskey also served as lieutenant governor from March 20 to Dec. 31, 1970, when Bill Milliken succeeded

then-Gov. George Romney, who resigned to become U.S. Secretary of Housing and Urban Development.

Watching Tanton's excitement and then a reality check made me realize how difficult it is for new people to become involved with the political process.

By the end of this election season, the News-Review will have interviewed almost a dozen candidates running for state offices ranging from legislator to governor. Because of term limits, most of the candidates are new.

I give anyone running for office a lot of credit. Those who are successful will proba-



John Tanton



ably be the ones who have some type of professional campaign manager and organization behind them. Others will probably not survive.

The notion of "Mr. Smith Goes to Washington," the old movie starring James Stewart where someone from the Smalltown, USA, can get elected in a major state or national race and head to the capitol is something left only for screenplay writers.

Ask anyone running for office what it takes to run a successful state campaign. My guess he or she will tell you that it takes thousands of dollars and a strong organization with people who know the system. Then one wonders if they want to go through the scrutiny laid upon them by the press and public.

I think that's why so often we don't always get the best candidates or people like Tanton who have a deep interest in the future of his state and nation, but realize the process one must have to go through to get on a ballot.

If reformers are truly interested in helping the political process, perhaps more time and energy could be directed toward looking at what it takes to get on the ballot.

*Ken Winter is News-Review editor and general manager. His column appears Monday on the Opinion Page.*