

A possible Senate candidate — right here

Petoskey Kiwanians had a chance to catch a glimpse of someone who might be running for national political office next year.

Retired Petoskey ophthalmologist John Tanton told Kiwanians he has joined the ranks of several other notables — Michigan U.S. Senator Spencer Abraham and First Lady Hillary Clinton, who is potentially making a bid for the U.S. Senate in New York. Both have not announced, but have set up exploratory committees to consider running for public office.

The 65-year-old local resident told some 50 local business people that like Abraham and Clinton, he has established his own exploratory committee and hopes to open an office in Petoskey shortly.

After having practiced medicine in Petoskey for 34 years at the former Burns Clinic, the eye surgeon is no stranger to local residents.

He has been active in the area, having helped establish the Little Traverse Land Conservancy 27 years ago and Northern Michigan Planned Parenthood, in addition to having been active in a host of other local, state and national conservation efforts.

He's past president of National Zero Population Growth and established and run several other national groups dealing with making English the official language of the United States and immigration issues.

Tanton, who may run against Abraham for Michigan's U.S. Senate seat, noted that while Abraham hasn't declared his Republican candidacy for office, he has already raised more than \$5 million. Also in the running is Democrat Michigan Congresswoman Debbie Stabenow.

We don't usually get a chance to watch someone from our area make a bid for national office. Although, over the years, we've seen people like former Petoskey attorney Paul Brown run for Michigan lieutenant governor with U.S. Rep. Sander Levin of Detroit as the Democratic candidate for governor in 1974 against former Gov. William Milliken of Traverse City.

Another major state office holder was



Retired Petoskey ophthalmologist John Tanton, at his annual Labor Day honey harvest. (NEWS-REVIEW photo by Ken Winter)

Judge Barbara MacKenzie of Petoskey, recently retired from the Michigan Court of Appeals after having been first elected in 1978.

At the recent luncheon meeting, Tanton sat with former Michigan state Sen. Tom Schweigert of Petoskey, who was also Michigan's lieutenant governor in 1970.

Tanton told Kiwanians that he plans to run as a Reform Party candidate, should he make a final decision to go after the office.

For those not familiar with the party, it's the one started as a third party by Texas billionaire H. Ross Perot. Minnesota Gov. Jesse Ventura is presently the party's major office holder.

"Many of the things that need to be addressed are in agreement by the two parties (Republicans and Democrats), so they're off the table," Tanton said about his interest in the Reform Party.

You may recall Tanton had a brief brush with the Reform Party during the last elec-



tion, when he looked at running for governor under its banner, but discovered he didn't have enough time to deal with the mountains of paperwork required to run for state office.

Tanton said he liked the Reform Party because he has become acquainted with many of its members and thinks they are solid.

He was quick to point out that third parties are not new to the political system, reminding listeners that the Republican Party started out that way in 1854.

A graduate of both Michigan State University and the University of Michigan Medical School, Tanton said his background in science would be helpful to the U.S. Senate that presently has only two members with that kind of background — a physician and veterinarian. By contrast, he said there are 56 lawyers in the Senate, which has 100 members.

Tanton says he plans to use experience in working on health and environment issues. He's particularly concerned about public policy related to immigration, as well as keeping the United States a cohesive society encouraging commonality with such things as English as an official language.

He cited as an example India, where its parliament has to deal with 12 different official languages, and Canada, that has two official languages.

Besides opening a Petoskey office, Tanton said he plans on having a web page. His most immediate plans are to meet with different groups and organizations to get briefed on their concerns and share ideas.

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



DATELINE

HUGH McDIARMID
POLITICS

TUESDAY
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Section B

IN BRIEF
**Billboards blight
road to Mackinac**

Let's hear it for the anti-billboard group. Scenic Michigan. It got what it calls the Mackinac Bridge Gateway listed this fall on a list of 12 so-called last-chance landscapes put out by its parent organization, Scenic America.

The list is of landscapes "most threatened" by billboards and other symptoms of sprawl where the potential still exists for scenic protection.

The gateway is roughly the 57-mile stretch of I-75 between Grayling and the Mackinac Bridge. According to Scenic America, "increased tourism has spurred a proliferation of billboards" in the gateway.

By its count, there are 131 billboard structures with 192 sign faces "cluttering this scenic, rural corridor" and creating illumination that "interferes with the nighttime view of the 5-mile-long Mackinac Bridge."

The solution, according to both Scenic groups, is for citizens to convince local governments in the area and the Michigan Department of Transportation to come up with a corridor management plan that controls billboards.

Easier said than done, of course, given the influence of Michigan's vast and well-heeled outdoor advertising lobby. Still . . .

Keep up the good work, Scenic Michigan. You've got it right.

HUGH McDIARMID can be reached at 313-223-4477.