

## County commission candidates challenged

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POLITICAL

NOTEBOOK

Police services issue serves as flash point , at least 5 of 11 incumbents opposed

News Staff Reporter

The filing deadline is Tuesday, but already it appears it will be a very busy campaign season for Washtenaw County commissioners largely due to the police services issue.

As of Friday, five of the 11 incumbents face challenges in either the Aug. 8 primary or the Nov. 7 general elections, according to the Washtenaw County Clerk's office.

Two challengers, Tony Martin of Ypsilanti Township and Mike Radzikof Saline are career law enforcement officers, and at least three circulated petitions with the Citizens to Save Our Sheriff's Committee, or S.O.S. That's the grass-roots organization that gathered more than 17,000 verified signatures last fall to derail a County Board-approved bond initiative to expand the county jail. The county would have used money currently earmarked for Washtenaw County Sheriff's patrols in communities with policing contracts to repay the bond debt.

The bond initiative was but one flashpoint in an ongoing dispute with local governments over the level of police services and who pays. Portions of a lawsuit on the matter are still pending in court and are likely headed to appeals court.

The controversy led to recall threats and promised challenges in the next election for several commissioners.

"The petitions were successful in stopping the bond plan, but we know meaningful change won't happen until the board is made of commissioners that make public safety a top priority," said S.O.S. spokesman Chuck Ream.

Ream, a Scio Township trustee, said he pondered his own commissioner campaign before deciding to seek the Democratic Party nomination in Michigan's 7th Congressional District.

S.O.S. insiders aren't the only ones seizing the opportunity.

Candidate Jessica Ping Mills, a Lodi Township Republican, said public safety and specifically the sheriff's road patrol will be a major focus of her campaign in her kickoff announcement last week.

County Administrator Bob Guenzel recognized the challenges as a concerted effort, but welcomed them diplomatically.

"We've been through some close elections before and these are legitimate issues. So if they feel differently than the board does, then they should run," Guenzel said.

Party faithful?

Historically a staunch supporter of the initiatives proposed by the White House, including President Bush's Iraq policy and tax cuts, U.S. Rep. Mike Rogers, R-Brighton, found himself in a bit of unfamiliar territory last week when it came to the nomination of a new director of the Central Intelligence Agency.

Rogers, a member of the House Select Committee on Intelligence and subcommittee chairman on intelligence policy and national security, opposed Bush's nomination of U.S. Air Force Gen. Michael Hayden for CIA director. Rogers cited fears Hayden would fatten the bureaucracy and de-emphasize the importance of agent fieldwork in the war on terror.

"I'm concerned that the nomination was a calculated decision to choose the path of least resistance," said Rogers, asserting that the White House caved to demands from the Department of Defense and National Intelligence Director John Negroponte.

"It was the easy decision, but I don't think it was a good decision, and moving in the direction of the military is the wrong course."

Rogers said he knows Hayden personally and doesn't doubt his ability as an administrator or judgment on how to use intelligence to

protect Americans. But blending someone from the military into a civilian intelligence agency may make the system too top heavy, which was a problem lawmakers wanted to address after the known intelligence community failures before the Sept. 11 attacks.

He was not alone in his criticism as both Democrats and even Bush loyalists on Capitol Hill indicated Hayden's confirmation wouldn't be easy.

Rogers resisted the notion of distancing himself from Bush at a time when polls indicate it may be wise to do so with elections in November. He characterized this and other differences with the president over the Dubai ports and Chinese currency issues as "genuinely honest disagreements over which way to go."

But it's also an easy time to be distancing himself.

Rogers, a former FBI agent, may also be trying to bolster his record on national intelligence issues since he'll face a retired CIA operative at the polls in the fall.

Jim Marcinkowski, an assistant city attorney from Royal Oak, is expected to give the three-time incumbent Rogers his most serious challenge from a Democratic opponent since he narrowly beat Dianne Byrum in 2000.

This is an occasional feature focusing on local and state politics through the November election. Have info? Art Aisner can be reached at [aaisner@annarbornews.com](mailto:aaisner@annarbornews.com) or 734-994-6823.

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