

Schauer, Renier lay out positions

Democrats running to unseat Walberg vary on few issues

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Local Democrats will get a chance to decide who will be their party's candidate in November for a job in Washington.

No, there won't be a second primary to choose between Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton, the job at hand is congressman and the candidates are Mark Schauer and Sharon

Renier. The latter are vying to be the party's standard-bearer in the 7th Congressional race against incumbent Republican Tim Walberg.

The 7th District includes Hillsdale County along with Branch, Eaton, Jackson, Lenawee and parts of Calhoun and Washtenaw counties.

For both Democrats, the struggling economy is a significant concern.

Renier, of Munith, said the problem lies in free-trade agreements, which she would like to see completely abol-



Renier

ished. She said the agreements, such as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and the General Agreements on Tariffs and Trade

(GATT), work to reduce trade barriers between countries. She said they are illegal treaties labeled "agreements" in disguise.

An agreement, unlike a treaty, is proposed by the president and can pass into law with a simple majority vote. A treaty, however, requires a two-



Schauer

see DEMS on page 3

DEMS

continued from front page

thirds majority for ratification — a percentage that Renier claims the agreements never attained.

"It's treason," she said. "The president cannot make law. A treaty needs to be passed by two thirds of the congress."

NAFTA is considered a treaty under international law, but is congressional-executive agreement under U.S. law. The U.S. House approved NAFTA 234-200 in 1993, while the Senate passed it 61-38. GATT has been in existence in some form since 1947.

Schauer, the state Senate Minority Leader from Battle Creek, also opposes free-trade agreements, which he says are sending American jobs to Mexico and China. He believes fair trade is the solution.

"I believe Hillsdale County workers can compete with anybody in the world on a level playing field," he said. "The uneven playing field is what is costing us jobs."

Coinciding with the economy, Schauer said that health care costs are the leading cause of bankruptcy and a system that needs to be reformed.

A significant problem, he said, is that the uninsured are told to go to the hospital when they are sick, which results in everyone paying more money to support them. Instead, Schauer supports providing basic health care coverage and affordable insurance to everyone.

Renier supports universal health care and advocates removing the cap on Social Security taxes to pay for it.

After a person's income reaches \$90,000 they no longer have to pay Social Security on it.

"I think the wealthy should pay their fair share," she said.

Renier also advocates reforming the entire medical system, which she believes is corrupt.

"There's so much waste in the government it's ridiculous," she said and described her experiences with doctors overprescribing medication and encouraging unnecessary surg-

eries that would earn them more money. She believes that cutting unnecessary expenses in the first place would greatly reduce health care costs. Though they advocate different reforms to the health care system, both Renier and Schauer agree that preventative care and encouraging people live healthy lives is the greatest solution.

When it comes to mortgage foreclosures, another pressing problem for the state, Renier believes the banks are largely responsible.

"These banks need to re-finance people at a lower rate," she said. "Schauer (who has been in the state senate) should have done something before it got bad."

Schauer insists that he has been "one of the leading voices in the Michigan legislature" to resolve the housing crisis and said that he voted for bipartisan legislation to regulate mortgage lending industries. For Schauer, the solution resides in regulating the mortgage lending industry, weeding out predatory lenders and providing solutions to victims of predatory lenders.

"We need to continue to regulate the mortgage lending industry," he said, "and provide some re-financing solutions to people who are victims of predatory lenders or to people who have lost their jobs, especially as a result of this administration's trade policies."

Again, mortgage foreclosures tie in with the struggling economy.

Economical struggles are made even more difficult by increasing gas prices. To combat these costs, both Schauer and Renier support the use of alternative energy.

"We need to work aggressively to create alternative solutions," said Schauer and described the need for a federal policy to help Michigan become a key player in creating alternative fuels for cars.

For Renier, the alternative fuel to consider is solar energy. She said that though electrical cars give the appearance of saving energy, they just change the form of the pollution.

The primary is Aug. 5.