

# Michigan Political History Society NEWS

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Spring 1999



## The Romney Years event kicks off 1999–2000 MPHS Program Series June 15th

Thirty years ago, **George Romney** resigned as Michigan governor to become the secretary of housing and urban development (HUD) in the incoming Nixon administration. His resignation concluded a six-year run as Michigan's chief executive.

Former Romney staff members will review the Romney gubernatorial years at a June 15, 1999 Michigan Political History Society event at the Michigan Chamber of Commerce, 600 South Walnut Street in Lansing. A reception at 5:30 p.m., precedes the program which will begin at 6:15 p.m. An afterglow with one-on-one conversation with the panelists will conclude the evening. The registration fee is \$20 for members and \$25 for non-members. Please make checks payable to: Michigan Political History Society, P.O. Box 4684, East Lansing, MI 48826-4684.

The Romney staff participating are **Bob Danhof**, legislative and legal advisor '63-'69; **Glenn**

**Allen**, state comptroller and budget director '63-'69; **Dick Milliman**, press secretary '62, campaign, '63-'65; **Chuck Harmon**, press secretary '65-'69; **Lucille Kapplinger Hazell**, legislative aide '63-'67; **Walt DeVries**, executive assistant for programs and policy '63-'68; and **Art Elliott**, campaign director '62 and state party chairman '63-'64.

Topics of discussion will include: the 1962 gubernatorial campaign; the transition; voter approval of the 1963 constitution, Romney's 1964 re-election amid the LBJ landslide and key legislative battles, such as the Executive Reorganization Act, the Public Employee Relations Act and the Income Tax Act. Panelists will also comment on the 1966 landslide, which produced coattails that allowed the GOP to gain control of both legislative chambers; the 1967 Detroit riot; the presidential campaign and Romney's decision to leave the governorship and join the Nixon cabinet.

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# Video autobiographies of political figures available

There are currently seven compelling videotaped interviews with key political figures now available through the State of Michigan Library. The videos were taped as part of the MPHS-sponsored project to capture Michigan's recent political history.

Interviews with **Robert Griffin**, **Elly Peterson**, **Mildred Jeffrey**, **Irving Bluestone**, **Tom Downs**, **Douglas Fraser** and **Adelaide Hart** are available. Others are in the planning stages. Videos and transcripts may be borrowed by calling (517) 336-5742.

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## 1999 Annual Meeting Highlights

The 1999 annual membership meeting was held on Saturday, February 27, at the offices of the Michigan State Medical Society. President Sharman Moore presided.

**Doug Drake** was elected a new member of the Society's Board of Directors. He will serve for a three-year term. Drake played an instrumental role in the MPHS/Wayne State University program held in December, 1998, which featured the former Speakers of the Michigan House of Representatives.

### MPHS Board of Directors election results

Secretary/Treasurer **Peter Kuhnmuensch** reported on the Society's membership and treasury balance.

Re-elected to the board were **Gary Buckberry**, **Dennis Cawthorne**, **Tom Cleary**, **Elizabeth Giese**, **Nancy McKeague**,

**Peter Kuhnmuensch** and **Barbara Sawyer-Koch**.

The membership elected new officers for 1999-2000—**Robert LaBrant**, President; **Peter Kuhnmuensch**, Vice President and **Barbara Sawyer-Koch**, Secretary/Treasurer.

Sharman Moore reviewed her five years as Society President and offered her vision for the organization's future.

The membership passed resolutions of appreciation to: outgoing President **Sharman Moore**; **Chuck Harmon** for his service as *MPHS News* editor, who has stepped down to complete a book relating to Michigan political history; **Jim Epolito** for providing layout and printing services for the *MPHS News* with the assistance of the Accident Fund of Michigan and **Joyce Crum** for handling the records and mailings of the Society.

Incoming President **Bob LaBrant** closed the meeting with a discussion of future MPHS program events and video histories of key Michigan political figures.

## MPHS Board of Directors roster

Following is the current roster and expiration years of the Board of Directors of the Michigan Political History Society, including those elected at the annual meeting on February 27.

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### 2000

Mary Brown  
Charles Harmon  
Kevin A. Kelly  
Robert LaBrant  
Sharman Moore  
Mark Murray  
John J.H. Schwarz, M.D.

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### 2001

Robert Danhof  
James Epolito  
Thomas Farrell  
James Haveman  
Laura Paige  
Sharon Peters  
Clifford Taylor

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### 2002

Gary Buckberry  
Dennis Cawthorne  
Thomas Cleary  
Elizabeth Homer  
Peter Kuhnmuensch  
Doug Drake  
Nancy McKeague  
Barbara Sawyer-Koch

# 1999-2000 MPHS Programs planned

When the votes were counted after the November, 1992 election and recounts completed, the State House stood at 55 Democrats-55 Republicans. It was the first partisan tie in the House chamber since the 1966 election and only the third tie in Michigan history—the first tie coming after the 1958 election. The 1993 State House organized differently than it did in 1959 or 1967 when Republicans managed to secure the majority in the House. In 1993, the State House operated under a shared power arrangement with co-speakers and co-committee chairs.

**Dan Loepp** has authored a book on the 1993 House tie titled *Sharing the Balance of Power*. It will be published this September by the University of Michigan Press.

The Michigan Political History Society will host a program featuring Loepp's book on Tuesday, September 28, at the Michigan Chamber of Commerce in Lansing. A reception will begin at 5:30 p.m., followed by the program at 6:15 p.m. Loepp will offer commentary on his book and former Co-Speakers **Curtis Hertel** and **Paul Hillegonds** have been invited to share their insights. A book signing will be held after the program.

Planning is also under way to hold three other MPHS programs next fall and winter.

One program will feature the Headlee Amendment of 1978 and how the campaign to qualify it and secure its passage changed the Michigan political scene. Before Headlee, Michigan was considered a high service, high tax state that would philosophically reject tax limits. The Republican Party under Governor Milliken was considered politically moderate. The tax limitation campaign attracted not only **Richard Headlee** who would later run for Governor in 1982, but also then State Representative **John Engler** and Harvard Law student, **Spence Abraham**, who together directed the campaign. Clearly the next generation of Republican leadership cut its statewide teeth with the Headlee Amendment campaign.

Another program in the planning stages spotlights the 1983 Senate recalls. The two recall elections held in November and December of 1982 followed the legislature's enactment earlier in the year of a 38 percent increase to the State income tax rate.

The special Senate elections held in January, 1984 to fill the recall-created vacancies resulted in two Republican victories giving the GOP a 20-18 majority for the first time in a decade. The Minority Leader, John Engler, then became the Senate Majority Leader and in many respects the titular leader of the

Republican Party over the next six years before he challenged Governor **James Blanchard** in 1990.

A third program being planned looks at the transformation of the **Michigan Education Association** (MEA) from a staid professional society of the 1950s into an aggressive labor organization in the mid-'60s and early '70s. During this period the MEA organized one of the most effective political action programs in the state which served as a national model.

There will be separate mailings to register for each of these events. Mark down the September 28 date now and plan to join us over the next year for more memorable events.



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**Officers:**

**President**  
Robert S. LaBrant

**Vice President**  
Peter Kuhnmuensch

**Secretary/Treasurer**  
Barbara Sawyer-Koch

**Past President**  
Sharman Moore

**Legal Counsel**  
Tom Downs

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# The Red Scare in post-war politics: McCarthyism Michigan style

*By David Murley*

This year's Academy Awards indicated that the Red Scare is still embedded in people's memories. As Elia Kazan, the director of several films, including "On the Waterfront" and "A Streetcar Named Desire," walked to the stage to accept a Lifetime Achievement Award, Hollywood personalities, including Nick Nolte and Ed Harris refused to stand in his honor. Some actors claimed that they would have nothing to do with a man who "named names" before the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC). Given Hollywood's fickleness regarding social and political causes, such a reaction might be understandable—until you consider that the alleged violation occurred nearly fifty years ago.

Such was the magnitude of the Red Scare. Michigan was no stranger to this episode in our nation's history. Before the Scare was over, the state would see several politicians rise and fall, our institutions of higher learning come under attack and a liberal governor who chose not to veto legislation designed to root out Communists.

Michigan's involvement with the Red Scare began in January 1947, shortly after a group known as the American Youth for Democracy (formerly the "Young Communist League") was expelled from

the Michigan State College Campus. The expulsion prompted Governor **Kim Sigler** and Senator **Matthew Callahan** (R-Detroit) to launch investigations into the AYD at the Wayne and University of Michigan campuses. The results of the investigations led U of M to ban the organization from its campus. In contrast, Wayne's President, David Dods Henry, announced that the university would recognize the organization as long as it did not violate school rules. When Sen. Callahan announced his opposition to further state appropriations to Wayne unless the AYD was removed from campus, Henry complied.

Callahan, buoyed by his success, proposed a bill that required any person or organization affiliated with a foreign agency to register with the Michigan attorney general. The bill passed overwhelmingly. Meanwhile, Gov. Sigler appeared before HUAC and testified that Michigan had 15,000 Communists and thousands of sympathizers within it; he also named some subversives, including State Sen. **Stanley Nowak** (D-Detroit). Back home, Sigler ordered an investigation of Communist influence among state workers.

After this flurry of activity in 1947, the issue of Communism seemed to decline in significance in Lansing, as did

the political stars of Sigler and Callahan. Sigler was defeated in a re-election bid by **G. Mennen "Soapy" Williams**, and the attorney general refused to enforce Callahan's law. An amendment to a school appropriations bill which would have required teachers to take a loyalty oath failed, as did a proposal to bar past or present Communists from teaching.

The respite was short-lived. In the Spring of 1950, an Anti-Communist Conference held in Lansing recommended outlawing the Communist Party. Governor Williams said he was against outlawing the party and called for a panel to study the problems of Communism. The Republican-dominated Senate rejected Williams' proposal and created its own loyalty commission—under the leadership of former Callahan committee member **Collin Smith** (R-Big Rapids)—to probe state employee involvement with Communism. Smith also called for the formation of a subversive investigation unit within the state police.

Governor Williams initially resisted the formation of a "Red Squad," fearing the inexact definition of this unit would lead to abuses. Meanwhile, Smith's Red Squad proposal passed 27-0 in the Senate and 73-4 in the House. The legislature also passed bills outlawing "activities leading to the over-

throw of the government” and violence committed in support of industrial or political change. Facing a tough re-election battle, Williams signed all three into law.

The 1950 election saw both parties exploit the Communist issue to gain votes. Williams accused a member of his own party (Sen. Stanley Nowak) of engaging in Communist-front activity, while his Republican challenger, former Governor **Harry Kelly**, inveighed that the Democratic Party was run by the “socialistic” tendencies of the Americans for Democratic Action.

Although Williams won the election, the GOP kept control of the legislature. During the session, several more “Red-control” bills passed the house. One required school boards to publish an “approved” list of textbooks; another required a loyalty oath from public employees. In 1952, the legislature passed the Trucks Act, which required Communists to register with the state, outlawed subversive organizations from the ballot, banned Communists from public employment and held that a public employee’s invocation of the Fifth Amendment before a legislative committee would be “prima facie” evidence of the truth of the committees’ charges. Both houses passed the bill unanimously and Governor Williams signed it into law.

1952 also brought HUAC to Detroit to hold hearings on Communism in Michigan. The committee heard about a violinist for the Detroit Symphony Orchestra that was alleged a Red. The violinist was later fired. A student from Wayne refused to answer the Committee’s questions; she was suspended by the university. Sen. **Charles Potter** promised an “undercover agent;” she turned out to be a nurse turned-FBI plant who fingered 150 communists in Michigan, including two Michigan State Professors. Most noteworthy was a heated exchange that occurred between Committee Counsel Frank Tavenner and an official for the Civil Rights Congress named **Coleman Young**.

1953 saw the opening of the trial of six Michigan Communist leaders for violations of the Smith Act. All six were found guilty. The presiding judge offered the convicted Communists transportation to the Soviet Union as an alternative to sentencing. When the six refused, they were fined \$10,000 each and sentenced to four to five years in prison.

HUAC returned to Michigan in 1954, led by Congressman **Kit Clardy**, a Republican from East Lansing. Two Michigan State professors met with Clardy and were “cleared” by him, while three professors from the University of Michigan proved uncooperative and were later fired.

1954 was the high-water mark for the Red Scare, both in Michigan and nationally. Senator McCarthy was humiliated in his hearings with the Army and Congressman Clardy was defeated by **Donald Hayworth**, a Michigan State Speech-Professor. Communism ceased being an important issue in the gubernatorial and legislative races. Senator Potter never served a second term in the U.S. Senate.

However, the effects of the Red Scare lingered within the state for years. The police Red Squad was not disbanded until the 1970s. The University of Michigan lost economics professor Lawrence Klein, who left because of the “poisoned” atmosphere on campus. He later won a Nobel Prize at the University of Pennsylvania. Governor William’s failure to use his veto, earned him the enmity of several civil libertarians. Politically, no one benefited in the long run from Michigan’s post-war Red Scare.

**100 Minute Video**

**Mr. Speaker:**

Conversations with former Speakers of the Michigan House of Representatives

Send your \$30 check made payable to MPHS:

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P.O. Box 4684  
East Lansing, MI 48826-4684

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# Looking back at Michigan political history

By *Chuck Harmon*

## 35 years ago

It was 1964, and **George Romney** was seeking his second term as governor. It was also a presidential year and is probably remembered best as the year Lyndon Johnson buried Barry Goldwater in a national landslide victory. There are several highlights to the '64 election year story:

Johnson carried Michigan by over one million votes, which by conventional wisdom should have ended Romney's political career. But the Johnson coattails did not affect the gubernatorial race and Romney beat Democrat **Neil Staebler** by 383,000 votes. The extent of the Romney win put him at the top of the list of prospective presidential candidates for 1968;

For the first time, under the then new state constitution, the candidates for governor and lieutenant governor ran in tandem. Candidates for the GOP spot to run with Romney were State Senate Majority Leader **William Milliken** and House Speaker **Allison Green**. The race divided the Republican party ideologically and geographically. Milliken narrowly defeated Green at the state convention. Romney had remained neutral and never publicly indicated his choice. Most "insiders" believe to this day he preferred Green;

In all other respects the election was a sweep for the Democrats. U.S. Senator **Philip Hart** beat **Elly Peterson** by over 900,000 votes. **James Hare** and **Frank Kelley** were re-elected as secretary of state and attorney general, respectively. Among several Democrats elected to Congress for the first time were **Billie Farnum**, **John Mackie**, **William Ford** and **John Conyers**.

The State Senate went 23-15 Democratic, including such freshmen as **Coleman Young**,

**Sander Levin** and **Jerry Hart**. The House went Democratic by a 74 to 36 margin, and welcomed **Bobby Crim** as a freshman, among many new faces.

## 45 years ago

It was 1954, and **G. Mennen ("Soapy") Williams** was running for an unprecedented 4th term as governor. He won, and for the first time he had major coattails. The Democrats swept the state level elections, in the process defeating six Republican incumbents.

Williams defeated **Donald Leonard**, state police commissioner, by over 250,000 votes. The other statewide Democratic victors were: **Philip Hart**, 42, of Detroit, Soapy's legal advisor, over Lieutenant Governor **Clarence Reid**; **James Hare**, 44, manager of the State Fair and a former teacher, over Secretary of State **Owen Cleary**; **Thomas M. Kavanaugh**, 45, a Carson City lawyer, over Attorney General **Frank Millard**; **Sanford Brown**, 45, of Bay Port, a dairy farmer, over State Treasurer **D. Hale Brake**; and **Victor Targonski**, a 40-year-old Wayne County assistant prosecutor, over Auditor General **John Martin, Jr.**

In addition, **Patrick McNamara** defeated veteran United States Senator **Homer Ferguson**, by some 34,000 votes. McNamara, a pipefitter and plumbing contractor, had won the Democratic nomination when the party leadership's choice, **Blair Moody**, died two weeks before the primary.

The State House's class of 1954 included such names as **Robert Waldron**, **Richard Van Dusen**, **John Bowman**, **Raymond Dzendzel** and **Dominic Jacobetti**, while

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newly-elected to the State Senate was a 29-year-old lawyer from Redford Township, **John Swainson**. Elected to Congress for the first time was **Martha Griffiths**, Williams' political ally.

## 55 years ago

It was 1944, and Governor **Harry Kelly** was seeking his second term—successfully, it turned out.

But the eyes of the political community were on Mason, the Ingham County seat, for most of the year as a one-man grand jury, Circuit Judge **Leland Carr**, and a special prosecutor, **Kim Sigler**, attacked the biggest payoff scandal in our state's political history.

On January 22, 1944, 20 members of the 1939 Michigan Legislature and six finance company executives were charged with giving and accepting bribes in conjunction with two bills aimed at tightening regulations related to auto financing.

The first legislative graft trial held in Michigan began on June 12 in the Mason courthouse. Two months later, on August 12, a jury convicted 17 of the lawmakers and three of the executives of the bribery conspiracy. Special Circuit Judge **John Simpson**, of Jackson, immediately sentenced the 20 to terms of three to five years.

The Sunday headline in the *Detroit Free Press* shouted, "20 CONVICTED BY GRAFT JURY." Also on page one was the news that allied forces had reached the outskirts of Paris. The primary reporter for the *Free Press* on the Carr-Sigler grand jury, **Kenneth McCormick**, would win a Pulitzer Prize for his coverage.

The grand jury had more work to do. Eventually Kim Sigler would ride his grand jury fame to the governorship, while Carr would serve for many years on the Michigan Supreme Court.

## 65 years ago

It was 1934, and **William Comstock** was governor. It would prove to be a year that saw both the sitting governor and former three-term governor lose in the primary elections.

Comstock, a Democrat, had run three times unsuccessfully for governor before winning in 1932 on the coattails of Franklin Delano Roosevelt. But it was the depths of the nation's worst depression and Comstock's term was, by necessity, action packed. He initiated a three percent sales tax to help insure the state's solvency, ordered the state's banks closed for several days in early 1933 to avoid their collapse and pushed through various welfare and emergency programs.

He was not rewarded by the voters for his aggressiveness. He was beaten in the Democratic primary of 1934 by a Detroit attorney, **Arthur J. Lacy**, by some 10,000 votes.

On the Republican side, **Alex Groesbeck** decided to try again. Groesbeck had been a three-term governor in 1921-26, then lost in his try for a fourth term to fellow Republican **Fred Green**. Groesbeck had tried an earlier comeback, in 1930, but was defeated by **Wilbur Brucker**. He thought the time was right in 1934. He was wrong.

The machine candidate was **Frank D. Fitzgerald**, 49, of Grand Ledge, a longtime GOP politico. Fitzgerald had been secretary of state for two terms and was the only Republican to survive the 1932 Democratic landslide at the state level. He beat Groesbeck by over two-to-one then defeated Lacy. It was Groesbeck's last try for state office.

One other election of note: **Arthur H. Vandenberg** was elected to his second term on the United States Senate, beating Democrat **Frank Picard** by some 52,000 votes.

# As Butch Cassidy said, "who are these guys?"



In the last issue of the *MPHS News* this photo was featured. MPHS members Jerry Coomes and Dennis Cawthorne have been able to identify all but one. Back row standing left to right: Paul Adams, Otis Smith, D. Hale Brake, Lynn Bartlett, Jim Hare, John Connally, Clair Taylor, Frank Synanski, Tom

Kavanaugh, Vic Targonski, Sandy Brown, William Vandenberg, Ira Polley, Jim Miller and Clarence Reid. Front row sitting left to right: **Unknown**, Stephen Roth, Gov. Williams and Lt. Gov. Swainson. **Can anyone identify our unknown political figure from 1959-60 at the lower left?**

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