



Representing Wayne State Faculty and Academic Staff

# NEWSBRIEFS

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## Granholtm vs. DeVos Education Issues In Race for Governor

With the general election just seven weeks away, the race for Governor has closed to a tight contest between Democratic incumbent Jennifer Granholm and Republican challenger Dick DeVos. This issue of *Newsbriefs* profiles the political background of the two contenders and outlines their positions on important aspects of educational policy.

### Candidate Profiles

**Jennifer Granholm** is a graduate of Harvard

Law School and a former prosecuting attorney who was groomed for a career in politics by the late Ed McNamara. She was elected State Attorney General in 1998 and served her entire term before running for Governor in 2002, when she became the first woman to hold the

state's highest office. She inherited a massive budget deficit from her Republican predecessor, John Engler, and now confronts the economic fallout from the declining fortunes of the Big 3 automakers. Her early efforts to balance the budget led to cutbacks in spending on education, and frequently put her at odds with the Republican legislature. In 2004, Granholm delivered a prime-time endorsement speech for John Kerry at the Democratic Party Convention.

**Dick DeVos** is a graduate of Northwood Institute and a former CEO of Amway Corporation, the family business he inherited from his father. He was elected to the State Board of Education in 1990 and resigned two years into his eight-year term after a series of missed meetings.<sup>1</sup>

Appointed to the Board of Control of Grand Valley State University by Governor Engler in 1996, he resigned in 2000 after missing more than half of the scheduled meetings.<sup>2</sup> He was at that time serving as state chairman of the ballot drive to divert public funds to vouchers for private schooling, a measure that was rejected by 69% of the voters. The DeVos family contributed \$602,000 to the first presidential campaign of George W. Bush,<sup>3</sup> and with the Van Andel family (co-founders of Amway) gave an estimated \$4.7 million in 2004 to Republican candidates and causes.<sup>4</sup>

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### Where They Agree

Both candidates join with the AFT and AAUP in opposing the so-called "Michigan Civil Rights Initiative" that would end all affirmative action programs for women and minorities in state government and public

universities. Both also are opposed to a second ballot initiative, Proposal 5, that would mandate annual increases in education funding for K-16 equal to at least the rate of inflation. In 2006, Governor Granholm supported increased funding for education that would match the rate of inflation, but neither she nor DeVos want to fix budget priorities in advance. The AFT and the AAUP disagree with both candidates on this score, and have joined with the Association of Michigan Universities and other educational groups ([michiganK16.org](http://michiganK16.org)) to make educational funding the key to Michigan's future economic growth.

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## Where They Disagree

Granholt's website (granholtforgovernor.com) features the legislative accomplishments she has signed into law, and provides a search engine that generates media stories as well as her own press releases on particular issues. As a challenger, Dick DeVos is at a disadvantage in this regard: his track record in government service is sparse and undistinguished, and his website (devosforgovernor.com) offers few details. The "news" search engine draws a blank for most issues, and the "media" section is dominated by self-produced video spots.

The key policy differences between Granholt and DeVos (or what we can surmise about his program) are summarized below:

### 1) Funding Education

Both Granholt and DeVos have pledged to increase funding for higher education, and both have favored elimination of the Single Business Tax (SBT) as a source of revenue. Before eliminating the SBT, however, Granholt wanted to first come to an agreement with the legislature on what alternative tax or taxes would generate the nearly \$2 billion in revenue lost from the SBT. DeVos, in contrast, called for the immediate elimination of the SBT with no replacement, and the Republican legislature has done his bidding in 2006. DeVos says he will replace some of the lost revenue with a "broad based" business tax, and will make up the rest by cutting "non-essential spending." He promises to divulge the details of this program *after* the election.<sup>5</sup>

### 2) Scholarships for Higher Education

Granholt wants to increase the Merit Award Scholarships for Michigan high school graduates from the current \$2,500 to \$4,000. Her stated goal is to make access to higher education universal and enable students to "compete successfully in a global economy." The scholarships are currently funded by the tobacco lawsuit settlement.<sup>6</sup> DeVos has avoided commentary on the Granholt proposal, but the Republican state chairman opposes the added cost and says his party is against changing a program that "doesn't need fixing."<sup>7</sup>

### 3) Stem Cell Research

Granholt wants to eliminate legislative restrictions on the development of new stem cell lines for research purposes at Michigan universities. Because of current legal constraints, she argues, the state can't compete for research funds or attract top talent in the life sciences. When interviewed on

public television, DeVos would only say that it is "a very, very complicated issue."<sup>8</sup> *The Lansing State Journal* noted that the candidate "wouldn't even venture a viewpoint."<sup>9</sup>

### 4) Vouchers for Private Schools

In 2000, DeVos campaigned for the failed ballot proposal that would have diverted public funds to vouchers for private schooling. The opposition of Granholt and many others defeated that initiative by more than a 2-1 margin. DeVos is reported to have said that he "learned his lesson" and will not push any such proposal again.<sup>10</sup> However, critics cite his speech to a conservative think tank in 2002, in which he regretted the defeat of the voucher initiative and vowed that "when the time comes we will bring the fight back to Michigan."<sup>11</sup>

## Endorsement

Faculty and academic staff will make their own decisions on who to vote for on November 7. In light of the above, the Political Action Committee of the AAUP-AFT recommends a vote for Jennifer Granholt as the better of the two candidates. She has struggled through an especially difficult period in Michigan's economic history and cannot be blamed for the deficits she inherited, the shortsightedness of U.S. automakers, or the corporate exodus to China and other low-wage economies where independent unions are suppressed and political dissent is stifled.

Granholt's track record indicates that she is a strong supporter of public education. DeVos' past record—and current silence—on these issues indicates a profound lack of support for public education.

<sup>1</sup> *Detroit News*, "Who is Dick DeVos?" (6/23/06).

<sup>2</sup> *Grand Rapids Press*, "Editorial" (10/4/00): "The school deserves more than absentee governance...."

<sup>3</sup> *Tom Hamburger*, "Big GOP Contributors Look for Return on Their Money," *Wall Street Journal* (12/28/2000)

<sup>4</sup> Chris Christoff, "Election 2006, The Race for Governor," *Detroit Free Press* (6/18/06)

<sup>5</sup> *Detroit Free Press*, "Editorial" (6/22/06)

<sup>6</sup> *Ann Arbor News* (8/17/06); State Press Release (8/14/06)

<sup>7</sup> Press release of 6/21/06, Michigan Republican Party website, [http://www.migop.org/pressreleases/search\\_results.asp](http://www.migop.org/pressreleases/search_results.asp)

<sup>8</sup> "Off the Record—Weekly Edition," WKAR Lansing (1/27/06).

<sup>9</sup> *The Lansing State Journal*, "Editorial: Stem Cells" (1/30/06)

<sup>10</sup> *Detroit News*, "Who is Dick DeVos?" (6/23/06).

<sup>11</sup> Transcript of DeVos speech to the Heritage Foundation, 12/3/02, cited on anti-DeVos website, "whatyoudontknowaboutdick.com."

# Open Letter from National AAUP President Cary Nelson

The open letter from Cary Nelson that is published below speaks for itself. It is in response to my article last month ("Fiasco at the AAUP") on the situation in the national office of one of our parent unions, the AAUP. In private communication, Cary has assured me that there will be reforms in procedures and substance under his administration. We will wait and see. We continue to withhold dues payment pending the provision of a proper financial accounting and an accurate membership census. To date, we have received only a partial and inadequate response on both matters. When the National Office chooses to respond to our request for this basic information, the Executive Committee will consider resuming our payment of dues.

Charles Parrish, AAUP-AFT

## An Open Letter to Charles Parrish

I was surprised to read a sustained critique of the AAUP's abandoned Bellagio conference in the August 2006 Wayne State *Newsbriefs*. News about the scheduled conference on academic boycotts broke fully six months ago and public discussion ceased not long afterward. The conference was planned by a small group of very smart people, people I genuinely admire, who nonetheless made several mistakes, among them neither fully informing nor consulting the elected leadership, which learned only through news reports that the original, rather innocuous proposal had metamorphosed into something controversial. The elected leadership acted swiftly, directing that the conference be postponed and establishing a set of rules to prevent comparable problems in the future. I made public my personal objections to the conference plan. In the end, the conference was abandoned and we moved on. Where I had genuine friendships with the conference organizers, those friendships survived our difference of opinion. Meanwhile, the conference sponsors—the Ford, Rockefeller, and Nathan Cummings Foundations—are paying for the publication of an *Academe* issue substantially devoted to the issue of academic boycotts.

To generalize from this unique event and claim the AAUP is mismanaging its defense of academic freedom is unwarranted and irresponsible. This is the year we worked

with state and local leadership month after month to beat back David Horowitz's assault on university independence. This is the year we launched one of the most ambitious investigations in our history, a comprehensive review of higher education's response to Hurricane Katrina, an investigation that will lead to the first set of principles for how universities should deal with a disaster. This is the year we drafted an historic document detailing a version of job security for part-time faculty that will increase protection of their academic freedom. This is the year we helped restore academic freedom to five campuses that are now off the censure list. The year that includes Bellagio is in fact one of our stellar years, a year of exceptional achievement. The distinguished faculty at Wayne State should take pride that their membership and their dues have helped make this possible.

We have faced two crises in the national office. Most of our operations continue at a high level of efficiency and excellence, including Committee A [on Academic Freedom], the Department of Organizing and Services [DOS], and legal services. But the membership department and financial record keeping have been in severe and unacceptable decline. No one could be more frustrated about this than I, since I have to deal daily with the results. Yet an accomplished outside CPA and his staff have now completed the reconstruction of the records for 2005, which will show we paid our bills and operated in the black. The 2005 report, due in June, will be issued two months late, an inconvenience, but certainly not a rationale for the severe decision to withhold dues. Two dedicated DOS staff members are simultaneously working to address membership records problems, a new responsibility for them and one that will take longer to complete. The elected leadership meanwhile has increased its monitoring of staff performance and outcomes in both these areas. For the record, we have 39,000 voting members and about 5,000 nonvoting fee payers.

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None of this justifies a hyperbolic assault on the AAUP or an abandonment of your chapter's financial responsibilities to your national organization. I look forward to putting this incident behind us and to working with all of you. Wayne State has a distinguished history of activism and research excellence. I have long admired both. I would be happy to discuss this further with any of you.

Cary Nelson

AAUP President, 24 August 2006

Yes, I want to contribute to  
AFT Michigan Political Action Committee

\$100       \$25 (less than 50 cents a week)  
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