



The Perricone Group



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## **Capitol Insiders: Engler buries Blanchard in mock Rematch**

*Lobby Guide Litmus Test: Engler wins on economics; Blanchard on protecting safety net.*

**LANSING, Mich** – If old rivals Jim Blanchard and John Engler were to face-off in an election for governor today, people wouldn't have to stay up until the wee hours to find out the winner of Round II, according to the Lobby Guide Litmus Test, an online survey of state Capitol insiders.

The survey conducted by Denno-Noor Research in partnership with The Rossman Group and The Perricone Group, found that Republican Engler would crush Democrat Blanchard among this group by a two-to-one margin, 67-33. When Engler shocked the political establishment in November 1990 by upsetting the two-term incumbent Blanchard, he did so by less than one percentage point and his victory wasn't assured until the next morning.

Engler -- noted during his 1991-2002 tenure as a tax-cutting reformer -- came out well on top on economic issues. Survey participants said he would be better suited than Blanchard to reform state government (85-15); balance the state budget (81-19); retool Michigan's economy (74-26); and reform state tax policy (71-29). The two ex-governors split the vote down the middle as to who would better make sure the infrastructure received proper funding.

Blanchard scored big on the question of which man would better protect the social safety net for the elderly, the poor and the sick. Blanchard bested Engler by a lopsided 88-12 margin. Even 87 percent of the Republicans who took part in the survey said Blanchard would be more compassionate.

"It's clear that people have long memories about safety net concerns and folks haven't forgotten that early in his administration Engler lopped 83,000 people off general assistance welfare and advocates for the poor set up a tent city on the snow-covered Capitol grounds," said Kelly Rossman-McKinney, APR, CEO and founder of The Rossman Group. "Those were strange days in Lansing."

Engler, who as governor seemingly never met a tax cut he didn't like, had a solid fan base among Democrats in the survey. On the question of who would step up and balance the budget, better than four in 10 Democrats (41 percent) gave the nod to Engler. Nearly a third of Democrats (31 percent) also gave Engler the edge on his ability to reform state tax policy.

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“And when it came to reforming Michigan government, a staggering 66 percent of Democrats said Engler would be better at getting it done,” said Denno-Noor Research President Dennis Denno. “Meanwhile, just a scant 2 percent of Republicans sided with Blanchard.”

Chuck Perricone, CEO of The Perricone Group and Speaker of the House (1999-2000) during Engler’s last term as governor, said people evidently miss the decisive form of leadership characteristic of Engler.

“Like him or not, John Engler was a take-no-prisoners kind of guy,” Perricone said. “It was lead, follow or get the hell out of the way.”

For the record, neither Engler nor Blanchard has an interest in returning as the state’s chief executive. They made that clear last week when, for the first time in 20 years, they shared the Michigan spotlight at a pair of fundraisers in Livonia and Grand Rapids for the Michigan Political Leadership Program.

The packed audience at Laurel Manor Thursday night was anxious to see how the once-bitter foes would behave. Engler quickly put the crowd at ease when he joked the reason everyone had shown up was the same one that compels people to visit the Michigan International Speedway. “You’re just waiting for the crash,” he said.

Actually the former governors – who presided over Michigan for 20 straight years – seemed to get along famously. They chuckled, made nice and even had complimentary things to say about one another.

Engler, 61, also joked that he wasn’t interested in running for U. S. Senate because he already had enough drama in his life with 15-year-old triplet daughters. Engler is the president of the National Association of Manufacturers and serves on the board of Delta Air Lines.

Blanchard, 67, served as President Bill Clinton’s U.S. Ambassador to Canada after leaving the governor’s office. He’s now the co-chair of the Government Affairs Practice Group for the global law firm DLA Piper and a member of the Board of Directors of Chrysler Group LLC.

Of those who responded to the survey, 41 percent identified themselves as Republicans, 21 percent as Democrats, and 38 percent of Capitol insiders called themselves Independents.

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#### **Attention Media:**

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- The Rossman Group
- The Perricone Group
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#### **Methodology**

The Lobby Guide Litmus Test was conducted on-line by Denno-Noor Research in partnership with The Rossman Group and The Perricone Group. All individuals listed in The Rossman Group’s 2009-2010 Michigan Legislators’ Guide to Lobbyists & Reporters were eligible to participate. Of the total universe of 553 potential interviews, 160 (29 percent) completed the survey from 8:00 AM Wednesday, March 2 to 5:00 PM. Thursday, March 4. All numbers were rounded, and total responses for an individual question may exceed 100%.