

COMMISSIONER



JOSEPH L.

BARAKAT

OAKLAND COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS



August, 1971

Dear Fellow Citizen,

You are the most important person in Oakland County. For that reason, when I ran for office last year, I put into my brochure all the facts, information and ideas I could gather to help you make some important decisions. I was told that the public wanted ballyhoo, not information. I chose to believe instead that the public both needed and desired facts and sound policy. I presented you with my ideas and goals, and you elected me as your representative with the faith that I would work towards those goals. I have not forgotten. In keeping with that mandate, I'm listing below the goals of last November, and on the back a progress report of my accomplishments to date. This is not a campaign flyer, nor are we in an election year. It's for your use, that you might be better informed — for knowledge is the strength of democracy.

Since I have no mailing privileges, I'm taking the time to bring you this for your information. Take a moment to read it, to be familiar with the issues that affect you. I stand ready to assist you in whatever way possible.

Sincerely,

Joseph L. Barakat

THE GOALS

- ① Streamline county government to eliminate duplication and strengthen its functions, making it more responsive to the needs of the people.
- ② Hold the line on taxes and seek tax reforms for more equitable tax distribution.
- ③ Decentralize services to put them within reach of the heavily populated areas.
- ④ Establish priorities for better utilization of present revenues.
- ⑤ Oppose the Orion-Oakland Airport in favor of more deserving programs.
- ⑥ Promote a more realistic approach to the prevention and cure of drug addiction.
- ⑦ Work for better roads, sewers, and flood controls.
- ⑧ Utilize the regional approach to transportation, pollution, and other monumental services.
- ⑨ Work closely with all elected and appointed city, county, state and federal officials to promote the best interest of our community and our county.
- ⑩ Keep the public informed on the issues and seek their ideas and opinions.
- ⑪ In general, encourage that which county government can best do to meet the human needs of the people.

COMMITTEES

LOCAL & REGIONAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

CHAIRMAN

HEALTH COMMITTEE

LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE

COMMITTEE ON ORGANIZATION

BOARDS & COMMISSIONS

PERSONNEL APPEAL BOARD

OFFICE

1200 N. Telegraph Rd.  
Pentac, Michigan 48053  
645-1150 or 338-4761  
Ext. 541

RESIDENCE:

1558 Durong Ave.  
Madison Hts, Mich. 48071  
Phone: 545-1871

## THE PROGRESS

- ① As chairman of the local and regional affairs committee, I urged study of the report by the Citizen's Research Council of Michigan, and implementation of those parts that would help streamline and make better use of our present system of county government. I wrote letters to officials and citizens in positions to know the effects and benefits of the plan, asking for suggestions and ideas.  
To utilize present resources and time more efficiently, I've urged that meetings be started on time, to avoid the waste of time for officials and hired personnel alike when the call to order is late. The resolutions I introduced to this effect, and my work on the committee on organization have always been based on a desire to see county government become effective, and responsive to the needs and desires of the people.  
I'm in the process of developing a seminar to bring together all levels of government in Oakland County to exchange ideas, share services, eliminate duplications, and in general, develop a line of communication between officials and governments for a more efficient utilization of county resources.
- ② I was in opposition to the Bell Telephone rate increase, and worked to schedule a public hearing on this matter. I believed it was in the interest of the people to know the facts, and have a chance to voice their opinions on matters that affect them, and even though I was unable to bring about a hearing, I focused attention on this important matter.  
I opposed the proposed tax increase from 15 to 16.5 mills that was before the Tax Allocation Board recently. Though not part of my regular duties, I attended the meetings of the board to speak against the tax increase, which was eventually defeated.  
As a member of the Legislative Committee, I've worked on many resolutions encouraging and backing legislative action in Lansing to bring a fixed share of state income tax back to county and local governments.  
At the same time, I've been active in the effort to increase Oakland County's share of the weight and road tax formula that we've been short-changed on for more than 15 years.
- ③ Southeastern Oakland County residents can now dial the county offices in Pontiac by use of a local number (645-1150) at no extra cost. Present plans call for continued expansion of county facilities in the Royal Oak area. Recently, as a member of the Health Committee, I submitted a resolution requesting federal assistance in the study and establishment of an HMO (Health Maintenance Organization) to bring about better health and ambulatory services, outpatient clinics, and general preventive medicine for the entire ten-city southeast Oakland area.  
Recently I requested of the drain office and the Parks and Recreation Department a study on the feasibility of establishing a "green-belt" on the area which is presently the Red Run Drain. This part of the county has the highest population density, and very little in the area of parks and recreation. My effort to extend the county parks and recreation system to this area is receiving favorable response and should soon produce results.
- ④ As you well know, the Oakland-Orion airport never did materialize. The present priorities are established on the formula of most essential needs vs. available revenues. Seldom in business or government are there sufficient monies to carry out all the desired projects. I am always on guard to oppose spending on less than crucial items, such as using tax dollars to build a stadium, and encourage those projects which can bring better services to the people of this area.  
Present priorities are:
  - law enforcement complex
  - mental retardation center
  - youth activities complex
  - south Oakland office building
  - Children's Village expansion
- ⑤ Drug abuse is a reflection of social problems and requires a two-directional approach:  
The first is to directly combat drug abuse by prevention of drug traffic through law enforcement, and by identifying and assisting the abusers through rehabilitation.  
The second is to identify the underlying social conditions and problems which cause drug abuse, and work through individuals and institutional changes to overcome the reliance and dependency on drugs as an escape. As a member of the Health Committee, and independently, I have worked closely with the Oakland County Department of Drug Abuse, with Mr. St. Souver and his staff, and other individuals and groups in an effort to seek solutions through local satellite programs and to seek short and long-range objectives.
- ⑥ I have worked closely with the County Road Commissioners in cooperation with local officials and Chamber of Commerce to bring about needed changes in the inadequate road and traffic lighting conditions in this area. There has been some action as a result of my recommendations and hopefully, efforts in this direction will increase in time.  
I have closely followed up sewer, drain, and flood control projects to ensure the best local benefits.
- ⑦ I have been very active in attending meetings and contributing ideas in an effort to further promote the regional approach to transportation and pollution. I've supported state legislation for the regionalization of library services and have held public hearings to obtain everyone's opinion.  
I've been appointed to a committee along with county health officials to isolate and seek solutions for pollution problems.
- ⑧ I have worked closely with the leaders of my own community, and officials at the county, many times attending meetings which I have no obligation to attend, just to keep track of important issues and be able to help the people that are affected by them. I keep contact by phone, letter and in person with those people responsible for the vital topics and issues in government today, often asking their opinion and suggestions in order to do a better job myself. I ask for reactions and ideas whenever it is my duty to hold a public hearing, make an appointment or draft a resolution.
- ⑨ My efforts to inform the public have taken many channels—communication with individual citizens and community groups by letter, telephone and personal contact. I keep informed myself by reading the reports and other information I receive as a commissioner, so as to be able to answer questions when my constituents call. Though the press gives me coverage from time to time, it is not always objective or complete. The reason for this letter and the effort I'm expending on this "off-year summer campaign" is in part a fulfillment of the promise of keeping you informed. Power leaders, pressure groups, political organizations, and the like are all an important and integral part of our political system. But in the final analysis it is you, the individual voter, acting independently, that makes the whole thing work. The strength of this country lies in its electorate, and each of you who exercise your franchise to register and vote comprise the electorate. Power groups are only powerful because they vote en bloc. If every American used his right, knowing that his vote does count, would take part in being informed and making an intelligent decision in voting, he would be sure of preserving and perpetuating our cherished freedoms. My effort to keep you informed is in a small way a part and parcel of preserving this heritage.
- ⑩ To meet the needs of the people of my district and my county, I have often put in long hours, attended extra meetings, continually updated my depth and understanding of the problems through research, communication, and involvement, and have devoted energy and determination to improve conditions and services for the benefit of my constituents.  
In general, and despite the handicap of being a freshman commissioner, I have encouraged that which I felt county government can best do to meet the very real needs of the residents of this area.

### In conclusion:

I want to tell you of my ideas and actions, of my dedication and deeds, and of my potential and plans. This very letter helps me achieve one of my goals, that of sharing with you to our mutual benefit the crucial and exciting issues before us today.  
I cannot include in such short space all the projects that I have been working on nor describe any one of them in much detail. My intention is only to inform you of some of my progress and to let you know that I am available to be of further help. If you have any questions or comments on these or any other items, I would be pleased to hear from you. I can better serve you by knowing your needs and feelings.