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U.S. Senate: Stabenow remains an energetic voice for mid-Michigan

A Lansing State Journal editorial

Six years ago, the LSJ Editorial Board posed three key questions for voters to consider in picking their next U.S. senator:

On the ballot

- The office: U.S. senator.
- Term: Six years, no term limits.
- Salary: \$165,200 (scheduled to rise to \$168,5000 in January 2007).
- Duties: Represent the views of the people of Michigan in Washington on federal issues; ratify treaties and confirm presidential appointments; draft, debate and pass laws.

Who will make health care and education a higher priority? Who will better safeguard Social Security? Who identifies best with average Michigianians.

Six years ago, the clear choice was then-Rep. Debbie Stabenow over then-Sen. Spencer Abraham.

Today, the choice remains clear: now-Sen. Debbie Stabenow over Oakland County Sheriff Mike Bouchard.

We endorse Debbie Stabenow for another six-year term in the U.S. Senate.

Much has changed about the world and the work of the U.S. Senate since that 2000 campaign. In the post-9/11 world, questions of national security, civil liberties and foreign policy have moved much more to the forefront.

But the basic equation remains the same: Which candidate better reflects mid-Michigan thinking; mid-Michigan interests?

Stabenow does.

The Lansing Democrat did not vote for the Iraq invasion because she, like so many others (including this board) was not convinced of that invasion's place in the fight against terror. But with the U.S. invested into Iraq, she rightly argues an immediate exit would do more harm than good: "My message (would be) that we are not there forever. The Iraqis must make some tough political decisions," she told the LSJ during a recent interview.

Stabenow also has a firm grasp on the burgeoning global challenge to American jobs.

"In a global economy ... is it a race to the bottom or a race to the top? ... We can't work for \$1.60 an hour. We'll lose our middle class," Stabenow argued.

Stabenow has worked for a more vigorous defense of American jobs and American exports. That fight must continue, and Stabenow is more inclined than Bouchard to wage it.

Then there is Stabenow's traditional strengths in domestic policy, especially health care.

Stabenow is a long-time advocate for prescription drug access, such as allowing seniors to "reimport" cheaper drugs purchased in Canada. That stand has long been opposed by the drug industry and its political allies, yet reports out of Capitol Hill are that reimportation is gaining more support.

Stabenow also recognizes the need to reform Medicare Part D, the drug benefit that has caused confusion among plenty of seniors. While Stabenow seems focused more on reform rather than the outright repeal and revamp we favor, the fact she recognizes a problem is a positive sign.

By contrast, Bouchard's campaign is a theme in negatives. He is basing his challenge primarily on the claim that Stabenow has been ineffective.

But for most of her term, Stabenow has been a member of the minority party. Bouchard's claim loses more punch when you relate it to another criticism: Stabenow's "tax-and-spend" ways.

When it was noted that Republicans have been running Congress and the White House as spending and debts have soared, Bouchard quipped he would criticize "everyone" who was wasting public money.

Bouchard might criticize, but he will lend his vote to the same Senate leadership that has presided over the massive surge in spending he's opposing.

Debbie Stabenow is an energetic and passionate representative of mid-Michigan's interests, of mid-Michigan's point of view. Voters should give her another six years in Washington, D.C.