

Start your engines! The governor's race is on

As a result of their conventions over the weekend, Republicans and Democrats now have their tickets set for the November general election. We can look forward to one of the most interesting and consequential elections in recent Michigan history, with the governorship vacant for the first time in more than a decade and both houses of the legislature potentially up for grabs.

At their party conventions over the weekend, GOP gubernatorial nominee L. Gov. Dick Posthumus picked State Sen. Loren Bennett to be his running mate while his Democratic opponent Attorney General Jennifer Granholm tabbed State Sen. John Cherry. Both selections highlight insights about the structure and dynamics of our major political parties.

Bennett, 51, is completing his second term in the state Senate. Before his election in 1994, he served six years as Canton Township Clerk. He was first elected to the township board in 1980, winning the part-time seat at age 29. He became interested in public office after attending a township meeting in the late 1970s when he was a member of the Jaycees.

By all accounts, Bennett is reasonably effective although not particularly inspiring lawmaker from Canton Township, the most rapidly growing community in vote-rich western Wayne County. A suburbanite who won in a slightly Republican district, Bennett offers some geographic balance to Posthumus, whose roots are deep in rural western Michigan. Whether he'll be a good attack dog against Granholm remains to be seen.

Most experts I talked with over the weekend called the nomination "safe but uninspired. One pointed out that, "Posthumus is the underdog in this race, and playing safe is hardly the way to jump-start a campaign that's already well behind."

An alternative, he said, would have been to select a moderate like State Sen. John "Joe" Schwarz — who differs with Posthumus on abortion and gun control but who appeals to suburban women and moderates — and have a big fight at the GOP convention.

"That way, win or lose," said my source,

"Posthumus would have demonstrated his willingness to reach beyond the traditional Republican base."

Win or lose? Lose badly, I suspect. The Republican state party apparatus — staunchly Right to Life and pro-gun — is firmly in control of any GOP convention vote. Schwarz, who could have been an asset to the ticket in the November election, is anathema to the GOP establishment. And history suggests that even Gov. John Engler was not always able to control his own convention against the establishment; witness the 1998 selection of John Smetanka over Scott Romney for Attorney General — a convention choice that opened the way for Granholm's election and subsequent rapid rise.

Looking at the Democratic selection is equally illuminating. Sen. Cherry, 51, of Clio (near Flint), has a wealth of legislative experience. He served two terms in the state House and four terms in the state Senate, where he was widely respected on both sides of the aisle.

Direct, sometimes to the point of gruffness, Cherry offers voters a contrast to Granholm. He's close to organized labor (Granholm was backed in the primary by only the teachers and the teamsters), has a mixed voting record on abortion (Granholm says she's solidly pro-choice), and is largely pro-gun (Granholm helped organize a ballot drive against the law that eased the barriers to getting a concealed weapon permit).

For Granholm, who clearly understands that a major Republican attack will be on her lack of Lansing experience (she's only served four years in the capital city), Cherry offers reassuring legislative seniority. Moreover, Granholm realizes that if elected governor in November, she will likely be facing at least one house of the legislature controlled by the opposing party. She will have to govern out of the center and to do so she will need somebody who knows the ins and outs of the legislative process. Cherry helps.

It's not that Democratic convention, where a majority of the voting delegates are members of organized labor, picking a union ally helps solidify the party after what could have been a bruising primary election.

Lady and gentleman, start your engines! The race is on.

Phil Power is the Chairman of the Board of the company that owns this newspaper. He would be pleased to get your reactions to this column either at (734) 953-2206 or at ppower@bmc.com.net.



Phil Power

LETTERS

Donohue will be missed

It has been said...the measure of one's life is not its duration, but its donation. The sudden passing of John Donohue marks an end to a life dedicated to public service, which has had enormous impact on our community.

As our city attorney, John provided invaluable advice, based on a thorough understanding of municipal law. But more importantly, his counsel was given with complete love and devotion to the people he served — the citizens of Farmington and Farmington Hills. He was a gentle man and a gentle soul. We all miss him dearly.

William S. Harisock
Former Mayor and Councilman
City of Farmington

Let the race begin

The primaries are history, let the race begin. We have Valerie Knol (R) and Aldo Vagnozzi (D) running for the seat vacated by Andrew Ruczkowski in the State House of Representatives.

As a resident of this district for 31 of my 73 years, let me urge you to vote for Valerie. She is a young woman of vigor, integrity, knowledge and ability. Her business success and her proven dedication to educational and community affairs should invite your support for her candidacy.

Her opponent is a very nice man. He has served for many years and his name is well known in the community. However, this is not a popularity contest. We are selecting someone to represent our interests in the State Legislature.

This is a very demanding job. When I want a complicated job done now, I hire it done, usually by a person with ability and vigor. Not too many years ago, I would do the work myself. Let's let Aldo rest after so many years of service.

Vote for vigor. Vote for Valerie.

Roy Trevisan
Farmington

Pride with limits

Undoubtedly, America is a great nation constantly managing the delicate balance of liberty, equality, and prosperity.

It's nothing less than comforting to live in a nation in which individuals have the Constitutional freedom to pursue happiness in all forms, as long as it isn't done at the expense of the civil rights of others. Just days after 9/11, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld told NBC's Meet the Press "We know our way of life is the best in the world." Care must be taken in statements of this sort. I'm not one to argue against it, when it comes to asserting our own future as Americans. But we are actually justified to impose that viewpoint on the behalves of other nations in the world? Are we in fact doing foreign nations a favor by intervening in their cultural, economic, or political affairs without request?

In a vast amount of cases I would say no. After all, the American way isn't necessarily the global way. We run into trouble when we as Americans

assume that our way of life is the best for everyone.

Such actions are perhaps arrogant at best and politically detrimental at worst. This mindset is the driving force behind the phenomena known as Americanization.

Consider the "McDonald's theory." When the franchise first opened its doors in Israel, workers were met with protests to the fact that burgers were made with cheese. This product is not kosher, according to Jewish culture. In other words, the foreign marketing of an American corporate venture may not always be welcome in other nations, without slight modifications.

America was a staunch advocate for the fall of the Soviet Union. While Gorbachev's policies of economic openness and political restructuring were endorsed by the U.S., the Neo-Soviet school of thought suggests that life may have been better under socialism. Though not the most dominate ideology of post-soviet Russia, clear disagreements with western influence exist in this ideology. Worldwide, cultures have been drastically changed if not wiped out due to the rapid imposition of American hegemony. Nations will make it clear if they are interested in contracting with American economic, social, and/or political influences. The choices however must be left up to them. I take pride in patriotism for my country. I am also conscious of its limits.

David R. Kinchen
Farmington Hills

Not a nomad

I was very amused while reading Mr. Kapko's letter on the Opinion page of the Observer on Thursday, August 15th.

Mr. Kapko tried to portray Valerie Knol as a nomadic politician trying to sneak into our town. Ms. Knol has been my neighbor since 1995, and also lived in the area the year prior. I disagree with Mr. Kapko and believe that anyone that has chosen to call our community home for eight years should not be classified as an "out-of-town carpetbagger".

Ms. Knol is extremely active in her community. She has already made Farmington/Farmington Hills a better place to live. Congratulations to Valerie on receiving endorsements from her birthplace, Grand Rapids. What a tremendous compliment. Ms. Knol left Grand Rapids in 1989 to attend college. She never returned. If your birthplace still supports you thirteen years after you have left, that speaks volumes on your character.

Isn't America a great country? You can leave your birthplace and choose where you want to live. To top it off, some people will even call you neighbor and a community member after eight years. Some, sadly not all. How many people reading this were actually born in Farmington or Farmington Hills? Good luck in November Valerie. You are young, energetic and your community is proud of you!

Anthony Racka
Farmington

LETTERS

Death for cop-killers

Finally, a public statement by Police Chief Dwyer I can wholeheartedly agree with: The death penalty for cop-killers. Indeed, I would like to see the death penalty for the murder of anyone, but it's a step in the right direction.

As Dwyer says, with the advances in forensic science, not to mention the many "evil rights" watchdog groups, there should be ample protection against wrongful convictions.

John M. Patrick
Farmington Hills

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