

Political Intrigue Marks One Illinois Primary

Written by Rich Miller

Tuesday, 13 January 2004 18:00

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So far, the ugliest state-legislative primary race is in suburban McHenry County. Two Republicans are battling to challenge state Representative Jack Franks (D-Crystal Lake) in the general election. Perry Moy (R-Woodstock) is the anointed candidate, a popular restaurant owner and county-board member who has widespread support among the local GOP organization. The House Republicans had hoped Moy would get a free pass in the primary. Moy is seen as a Class A guy. He is a former chairperson of the Illinois Restaurant Association, was a delegate for George W. Bush in 2000, sits on commuter train system METRA's citizens advisory board, and is a member of Centegra's corporate board.

Word was that Representative Franks was more than a bit worried when Moy decided to run. The Republicans claim Franks tried to force the GOP to pull Moy's bid by threatening to run for the Illinois Senate against an appointed Republican incumbent. The offer was declined.

And then, out of the blue, an almost completely unknown local Republican named Ed Beard filed nominating petitions to run against Moy in the primary, and the accusations started flying.

A primary in McHenry is not unusual. The Republicans have been bitterly divided into two factions for years between the "regulars" and the "movement conservatives." The bloodshed has abated recently, however. And while Moy was backed by the regulars, Beard didn't come out of the conservative wing, so the regulars were immediately suspicious.

Not long after Beard filed, the Republicans publicly charged that he was "planted" in the race by Franks and the Democrats. The local GOP county chairperson even challenged Beard to take a lie detector test to "prove" he was a bona-fide Republican candidate.

Beard has vigorously denied the accusations, but the law firm he is using to challenge Moy's candidacy – Power, Rogers & Smith – has contributed hundreds of thousands of dollars to Democratic candidates.

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Coincidentally, or not, the firm has also given \$6,800 to Representative Franks. The Chicago firm has never been thought of as an election-law specialist. It mostly handles civil litigation and is best known for filing a lawsuit that triggered the federal investigation into George Ryan and his cronies.

And elections records show that an Ed Beard of the same age at the same address took a Democratic ballot in the 2000 primary. Beard did take a Republican ballot in 2002, however. He could not be reached for comment on Friday.

Beard's legal case against Moy rests on the allegation that Moy hasn't lived in the district long enough to qualify for the ballot. State law requires candidates to live in a House district for two years. Moy was registered to vote in a different district until he changed his registration in May. According to one press report, Moy voted at the address in the other House district as recently as April.

To bolster his case, Beard has subpoenaed Moy's divorce records, as well as other personal health and financial papers. The Republicans claim Beard wants the records to assault Moy's character, not to disprove his residency.

Because the district lies completely within McHenry County, the local elections board is handling the case. That board is controlled by the county's regular Republicans, so a Moy victory has been predicted. Beard could appeal, but without solid evidence that Moy had no residence at all within the district for the past two years, the courts are likely to be lenient. Still, if Moy voted in a different district last spring, his goose could be cooked on appeal.

If Beard loses this case and Moy stays on the ballot, you can bet big money that the Republicans will try to hang this whole thing on Franks and try to use it to weaken him during the fall. Using "Chicago tactics" to meddle in a Republican primary with a "phony" candidate would be a public-relations nightmare for Franks.

The district is solidly Republican, but Franks has been able to prevail there because of a combination of hard work and a reputation for moderation and honesty. The local newspaper has shown time and again that it doesn't care for Franks, so if it decides that the Beard candidacy is a fake, Franks' reputation could be damaged, whether he did it or not.

Rich Miller also publishes Capitol Fax, a daily political newsletter. He can be reached at (<http://www.capitolfax.com>).