



Friday, January 8, 2010

MANAGEMENT

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Centerpiece

Lansing Mayor Virg Bernero was sworn into office for a second term on Tuesday, but that's not what a gaggle of reporters showed up at the Lansing Armory to talk to the Mayor about.

Lt. Gov. John Cherry had, hours before, dropped out of the running for the Democratic Party's nomination for Governor. This had put a spotlight on Bernero, who has launched a gubernatorial exploratory committee and is actively seeking endorsements and support in Detroit among other places in Michigan.

Bernero is seen by some as the Democrats' leading gubernatorial hopeful, at the moment, given the relatively shallow field of candidates and the large amount of uncertainty that still surrounds the race.

Q. Now that John Cherry is not running what do you think your chances are?

A. I think my chances are good. I think they were pretty good in the first place; that's why I'm looking at it. I've been on my timeline, and I'm going to stay on my timeline, but obviously John Cherry's exit from the race is a game-changer, something we have to evaluate and take a look at.

If I do run, I would love to have Lt. Gov. Cherry's support, and as I said before, John Cherry is a wonderful man. He's a dedicated public servant. I've had the chance to work with John and under John as a staffer for years coming up in public service. I look forward to comparing notes with him on the race.

Q. Is this a sure thing? Are you running for Governor?

A. If this were a sure thing, I would have announced.

Q. What has been the public reaction that you've heard regarding Cherry?

A. Well, my phone has blown up a little bit. So there's no question that there were people, out of deference, respect and loyalty to the Lieutenant Governor, who stood on the sidelines or stood with him. This clearly frees people up. You've got people who were in limbo before. Now, they realize the race is wide open.

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You have other people who were committed to John and others who said, "If John wasn't in the race, we'd support you."

Q. Do you consider yourself a frontrunner?

A. If I get in, it's because I think I'm a frontrunner. I'm an optimist so I think I'm a frontrunner, and if I get in, it's because I think we can win and that we have the message, the team and the plan to move Michigan forward.

Q. How much money do you think you need to raise?

A. That's part of the exploration process. What I have found out early in this process is that there are a lot of people who will support me and write checks. The question is, "Is it enough?" This would be my first statewide campaign. I'm still trying to evaluate that.

The whole rules of politics are in flux right now. There's been articles in the press about how giving is down. Lobbyists are spending less because of the economy. That issue over how much money it will take is in flux. Suffice to say, it will take a lot of money, more money than I've ever raised, and that's one of the things that will be in our consideration.

Q. When did you say you would make an announcement, the end of the month?

A. Yes, more or less. Somewhere in there because there's so much to do. You need to make a decision and move on.

GCSEye On The Capitol

Cherry Opts Against Run, Dillon Explores Bid

Lt. Gov. John Cherry, the Democratic Party's frontrunner for the 2010 gubernatorial nomination, opted against formally getting into the race on Tuesday, citing concerns about raising the type of money he would need to be successful in November.

The news prompted House Speaker Andy Dillon to accelerate his own plans for 2010. The day Cherry made his decision, Dillon shot a video that appeared on his campaign website in which he announced he was forming a gubernatorial exploratory committee. Lansing Mayor Virg Bernero also has created an exploratory committee, which will allow both of them to raise money they could use for a bid.

Sen. Hansen Clarke (D-Detroit) announced hours after the Cherry decision that he was getting into the race. University of Michigan Regent Denise Iltch is considering hopping in as well. U.S. Rep. Bart Stupak has not ruled it out, and Detroit Pistons great Joe Dumars has been approached and has not said no, yet. Rep. Alma Wheeler Smith and former Rep. John Freeman have been in the race for several months.

Prominent Democrats who have ruled out a run in 2010 include U.S. Sen. Debbie Stabenow, former Congressman David Bonior, former Gov. Jim Blanchard, Wayne County Executive Bob Ficano and Congressman Gary Peters.

School Districts Applying For RTTT

School districts throughout the state had until Friday to tell the Department of Education (MDE) whether they planned on applying for federal Race to the Top (RTTT) money, funds the districts could use to implement a series of reforms designed to boost student achievements.

President Barack Obama wants school districts to link how well their students perform to individual teachers, giving districts a guide as to which instructors are making the grade and which ones need attention, even if that means dismissal.

Those school districts wishing to participate needed to, at the very least, send MDE officials a statement of intent by Friday that they planned on sending a formal Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) by Tuesday so the MDE can mail its application to the U.S. Department of Education by the end of the day.

Humphries Or Rasher For DNRE Director?

The Natural Resources Commission (NRC) on Thursday recommended that Gov. Jennifer Granholm appoint Department of Natural Resources Director Rebecca Humphries to head a new department that merges the DNR with the Department of Environmental Quality.

Michigan Factoid:

In 1839, the Michigan state Senate designated Marshall as the state capital only to have the measure defeated in the state House of Representatives.

Some are speculating Bruce Rasher, who has been leading the transition of combining the two departments, will end up receiving the Governor's nod when recombination becomes official Jan. 17.

Rasher recommended that the current 16 divisions within the two departments be recombined into nine and that environmental protection functions be carved into three bureaus.

The Week Ahead

Legislature Returns Wednesday, Thursday

The House and Senate are planning to return Wednesday and Thursday for session, and several key committees have already scheduled meetings. The House Education Committee will take testimony Thursday morning on whether emergency financial managers can take on certain powers during "academic emergencies." The reference is to the city of Detroit, where students' test scores within the indebted district continue to struggle.

Also, a joint hearing of the House and Senate environmental committees will hear testimony 8 a.m. Thursday from Cameron Davis, the senior advisor to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency administrator on the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative.

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