



Friday, January 15, 2010

MANAGEMENT

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## Centerpiece

This week, *GCSIntel* interviewed former Genesee County Treasurer Dan Kildee about the Democratic gubernatorial nomination race. Kildee's name is one of a handful that has been circulated as a possible candidate in light of last week's news that Lt. Gov. John Cherry was dropping out of the race.

### **Q. Where are you at in your thinking in terms of running for the Democratic nomination?**

A. As I've told people, there are really three questions that I have had to ask myself. My family comes first, and I have to make sure the kind of campaign that this would have to be is something I could work through with my family. Part of the additional challenge that I'm working through, and I can't say is completely settled, is that I just became the president of a new national think-tank on urban land and urban policy. I resigned as county treasurer December 31st never imagining that a week ago this whole thing would erupt.

I've got some hurdles to overcome in making sure it's something that I can do without compromising the commitments that I've made to the people that I've hired in this organization and to the funders that have committed to support it. It's an important new initiative so I can't just blow by that. I'm not independently wealthy. Third, and most critical and most interesting to you and others is, I have got to make sure the politics of this is right. I have to make sure that there is a path for me that leads to winning.

I don't believe in running for governor unless I honestly believe there is a reasonable expectation that I can win. I just don't believe in entering a political contest unless I believe there is a chance to win.

I certainly do want to be the governor of the state of Michigan and I have for some time because I think there's some really important work that has to happen that hasn't happened. Just believing that doesn't quite get you there. You've got to also be able to put a campaign together and have a campaign plan for winning.

### **Q. You sound like you were surprised by the Cherry announcement?**

A. I was surprised. I knew that there were problems within the campaign, but I still believed there was a path for John. I know the problems that John was facing, and I knew that a lot of it had to deal with the feeling by people that Lansing had failed them. Some of that unfairly applies to John because he's been a real strong and steady voice for reason. I can't say that everyone's always listened to him, but I felt like there was a path for John.

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These decisions are political in part, but they're also very personal decisions and I believe that John made the right decision for himself and his family, and probably politically it was the right decision, but it sure came at an inopportune time.

**Q. Four potential Democratic candidates for governor now claim they've talked to the White House about running. Have you talked to the White House or White House operatives about running?**

A. No, I've not. You know I have a lot of friends in the White House, and I'm not trying to take shots at anybody, but I could probably contrive a conversation with somebody in the White House too. The White House isn't going to make the decision about who Michigan's nominee will be.

All I can say about it so far is that for those that have been able to get a lot of attention for a White House visit: Well played. But, the people who are going to make this decision live in Michigan.

I love Barack Obama; I think he's a tremendous leader and a great president, but the people that are going to make the decision about this nomination live here in Michigan right now.

**Q. Given the sudden vacuum that was created last week by the Lieutenant Governor's withdrawal, how long do you think those that are considering it have to make a decision and get engaged?**

A. It's not long, obviously. I think it's a matter of a few weeks. It's hard to put a precise date on it. As long as nobody breaks out of the pack and somehow consolidates a lot of organizational support, I think it's still quite open even for new names we haven't heard yet.

I think the other variable that supports a quick but careful process is the fact that the Republicans are quite disorganized themselves. There doesn't seem to be much order to their process either. It's not getting a lot of attention. Had the Republicans already coalesced around one candidate and that candidate were really strong -- and that means somebody not in the current field -- then there's more pressure for Democrats to make a decision and make one fast.

For whoever gets into this, it's not going to be a two-and-a-half year protracted campaign. We're in crunch time. What we have now is a campaign that is going to be comprised of a handful of months.

**Q. Part of what John Cherry faced that was expressed in polls was the drag that came with being part of the Granholm administration for the past eight years. Is that an issue for other Democrats, and how do you get around that?**

A. I think it's an issue; I think we have an obligation to start taking that on in some ways. There have been differences I've had with the Granholm administration that I won't get into, but even saying that it's pretty hard to pin a worldwide economic meltdown on the governor of the State of Michigan.

But, having said that, absolutely, it's going to be a challenge for any Democrat to make sure people don't perceive the nominee of our party as a continuation of the last decade or so. Whether that's fair or not, that's just a practical assessment of the mood of the electorate.

I think you're right; I think that's critical. That's why I think it makes it more difficult for somebody who is in Lansing or part of the Lansing environment to break free of that.

## ***GCSEye On The Capitol***

### ***Poll: Hike Income Tax, Lower Biz Taxes***

A plurality of Michiganders would like to see higher income taxes and lower business taxes, according to a new in-depth poll conducted by the production company of the PBS NewsHour.

The first-ever Michigan Deliberative Poll done by MacNeil/Lehrer Productions, the Center for Deliberative Democracy at Stanford University and the W.K. Kellogg Foundation was based on a weekend retreat at the Lansing Center involving 314 Michigan residents selected as being a representative cross-section of the state's population.

They were not screened to be registered voters.

"We wanted to know what people thought and were not driving them toward any particular conclusion," said Dan Werner, executive producer of MacNeil/Lehrer Productions. "We want this conversation to contribute to the discussion about the future of Michigan. The goal of a deliberative poll is not necessarily to come to consensus, but it was interesting that we were able to see participants come together on so many issues."

### ***Kennecott Mine Gets DEQ's Final OK***

Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) officials this week gave their final blessing on the Kennecott Mine project near Marquette, having approved the permits necessary for the proposed nickel and copper mine.

Kennecott Eagle Minerals Company said it was preparing the construction plans needed to start building the \$300 million underground mine this year. Project officials estimated that the new construction would create an estimated 700 jobs. The mine is slated to begin producing nickel and copper in 2013.

### ***Business Group Backs 5.5% Expanded Sales Tax***

Michigan would expand its sales tax to services, drop its rate from 6 to 5.5 percent and cut business taxes in half under a revenue-neutral proposal pitched Wednesday by the Business Leaders for Michigan (BLM).

In a deviation from the "no new taxes" mantra of other business groups in town, the collection of CEOs formerly known as Detroit Renaissance publicly came out with a plan that they claim would make Michigan look more attractive to job providers and roll back the national perception that Michigan is not a desirable place to do business.

#### **Michigan Factoid:**

When the first stretch of the Detroit and Pontiac Railroad was opened in 1838, the rail cars were pulled by horses.

-- Michigan Trivia

## **The Week Ahead**

The House and Senate return to three-session-day weeks next week as the legislature gears back up following the Christmas/New Year break.

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