



Friday, January 22, 2010

MANAGEMENT

Nell Kuhnmuench

Michael D. Hawks

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Kirk A. Profit

Kenneth Cole

Centerpiece

Today, GCSIntel sat down with Lansing Mayor Virgil Bernero who is considering running for the Democratic nomination for governor. The following are excerpts from that conversation about how Bernero views the race and what reaction he's gotten to date on a possible bid.

Q. Talk about John Cherry's departure from the field of candidates --- what changed for you?

A. Well, John Cherry is deeply respected and admired by myself and many stalwarts in the Democratic Party. When I started my exploratory, of course, I ran into a lot of people that supported John Cherry. There were nothing but warm, fond feelings for John when he was running and now.

Some people felt that he wouldn't be able to pull it off. He was dogged with the legacy of the good and the bad of the administration and right now people are looking for change. The feeling was he couldn't fight his way out of that. When he withdrew our campaign -- we'd just launched the exploratory. We were very much a fledgling effort and just going out and meeting people and expressing interest and testing the waters.

This [post Cherry] is like being out on dinghy where you tend to just stay right next to shore and all of a sudden you get blown into the eye of a hurricane. We're out there virtually without a paddle. We were deluged with calls, with offers of help, with inquiries, with speech requests - our website just about crashed.

There was a great response, much greater interest in our effort when that happened. In fact the combination of John Cherry's pulling-out and then [House Speaker Andy Dillon] announcing his exploratory, that was the second wave of diehard Democrats coming to us.

In a sense, it's been an embarrassment of riches since those two announcements.

Q. Since you first announced, is there a single positive and a single negative reaction that sticks out most in your mind?

A. The single most positive was just from regular people in the community here when I went to Meijer. It was around the holidays and people were shopping and I'd see them and they'd say 'are you going to do it? Are you going to do it?' And, I'd say 'well, what do you think, should I?' And they'd say 'hell yes, we need strong leadership.'

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I got that a lot and so that was encouraging that people right here in Lansing thought that. Sometimes they'd say 'I voted for you; I'll vote for you for governor.' So, a lot of support in mid-Michigan. And, a lot of the gut-wrenching; the people that would say, 'I've been unemployed for eight months', or 'I've been unemployed for 14 months. I hope you get in there and can make a real difference.'

It really gets you.

The single surprise about the negative, I thought Carol Wood would be delighted that I'm leaving City Hall, and yet, boy, she was really quite vituperative about her attacks.

Q. Talk a little bit about when you met with the Democratic leadership group this week, what did you tell them differentiates you from the rest of the potential candidates? Why Virgil Bernero?

A. Everybody that knows me knows that I'm different than any other candidate. That I am not smoothed down and polished, that I'm an average guy who happens to be mayor and who's hopefully going to do some good. I've had a variety of experiences in public service, and I've tried to stand up for working people, and I'm not always politically correct. I'm a little rough around the edges, and I tell it like it is.

I say I'm the 'Harry Truman' candidate in the race. Harry Truman said he was always told 'Give 'em hell, Harry.' He always said 'I didn't give 'em hell. I just told them like it was and they thought it was hell.'

I just told them if what you want is a buttoned down, polished, mediocre, middle of the road, milquetoast candidate, that's not me. I told them you're not going to elect a Virg Bernero in smooth, conventional times. If the water is just fine and you're on a boat just enjoying the calm beautiful summer day with no ripples, you don't want Virg Bernero on the boat because I'm going to rock that boat.

But, if you're headed down the rapids and things are getting rough and you even sense there's a cliff coming, then you want Virg Bernero on that boat because Virg Bernero knows how to make calculated risks, to make tough turns, quick turns when they need to be done. He'll get you to shore; it might be a rough ride, but he'll get you to shore.

Q. Talk about the challenges the following people would face: Andy Dillon, Denise Ilitch, Bob Bowman and Dan Kildee?

A. Well, you know, I'm really not good at talking about these people; I don't really know them. I've met Andy Dillon; we've talked here and there. Dan Kildee is a good man, done an admirable job as treasurer. But, most of these people I don't know well. I know me and my policies and what I stand for. I'm not really interested in attacking any of my opponents; I'd rather attack the issues. We have serious issues confronting Michigan.

GCSEye On The Capitol

Highest Court Says OK For Corporations To Promote Candidates

The U.S. Supreme Court on Thursday issued a decision that would allow corporations to spend from their own resources on advertisements advocating for or against the election of certain candidates.

The ruling came in *Citizens United v Federal Elections Commission* that was originally about a short docu-drama created by a conservative non-profit corporation called *Hillary* that was critical of then-U.S. Sen. Hillary Clinton's presidential candidacy in 2008. Citizens United, which put together the film, asked for a ruling by the court holding that law limiting corporate spending on election messages was unconstitutional when applied to the film in question.

The lower courts held up existing law and an appeal took the case up the U.S. Supreme Court.

Dems Continue Search For Gubernatorial Candidate

Organized labor continued interviewing potential gubernatorial candidates this week inside the David Miller building near the Solidarity House in Detroit.

The list of candidates on tap to make their case as to why they should be the Democratic Party's nominee included: House Speaker Andy Dillon (D-Redford Twp.), Rep. Alma Wheeler Smith (D-Salem Twp.), Lansing Mayor Virg Bernero and University of Michigan Trustee Denise Ilitch.

Each person was given up to an hour to make a statement. They then handled questions from the 15 to 20 individuals in the room, including Michigan AFL-CIO President Mark Gaffney, AFSCME President Albert Garrett, Michigan Democratic Party Chair Mark Brewer and Michigan Federation of Teachers President David Hecker, among others. Gov. Jennifer Granholm, who attended the cattle call in Novi on Saturday, was not in attendance.

Snyder Raises \$3.2M For Gov's Race

Republican gubernatorial candidate Rick Snyder will report to the Secretary of State on Feb. 1 that his campaign raised more than \$3.2 million in 2009, a whopping amount that his supporters say shows he's a serious candidate.

Snyder Spokesman Jake Suski, however, declined to elaborate on what Snyder would report when gubernatorial candidates' finance statements are due to be publicly released at the end of the month.

Michigan Factoid:

In 1904, the opening of Buick marked the beginning of the automobile industry in the City of Flint.

-- *Michigan Trivia*

How much did the wealthy Ann Arbor businessman contribute himself? How many contributors donated to the campaign? All questions on details were met with a "We're going to release that on Feb. 1."

"He's committed to winning," Suski said. "He's personally invested in this race because he's passionate about leading this state out of an economic disaster. He's not taking special interest money. He understands the next governor has to work on behalf of all Michigan citizens, not just a few special interests."

The Week Ahead

Lansing will begin talking more about the Governor's upcoming State of the State address scheduled for Wed., Feb. 3. If past trends follow, expect some key details to be leaked to the media as earlier as next weekend.

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