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MANAGEMENT

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Centerpiece

This week *GCSIntel* sat down with Sen. Michelle McManus (R-Lake Leelanau) to talk about her efforts to win the GOP Secretary of State nomination next year.

Q. Why run for Secretary of State? What do you hope to change or do differently?

A. I entered public service because I want to serve the people. When I look at the Secretary of State's office that is the one office, the one part of the executive branch where every single citizen has some sort of interaction.

When I first came here, I never thought I'd run for State Representative. I thought I'd work in state government and try to fix problems that way. I was lucky enough to win, and I was able to figure out I could help people in working with the bureaucracy.

I grew up on a cherry farm where I learned hard work, but my grandparents also owned a clothing store -- it was always the customer is right, the customer is first, so I took that philosophy with me to Lansing, and that's really a big part of the Secretary of State's job -- to make sure you have access and that you have timely renewal of the tags or licenses or whatever you need.

I think in an economic time like today, we need people with experience that have worked through the legislative process in good times and bad, who know how to cut the budget and know how to be efficient. I oversee the Secretary of State's budget in Appropriations and also chair Campaigns and Elections Oversight. I think both of those two things give me a different perspective than the other candidates.

Q. What part of the job interests you more -- the elections administration or branch office operations?

A. I really like both of those. The biggest part of the Secretary of State's budget is -- when you're thinking about it, you think elections. Most people think elections when they think about Secretary of State, but she only operates and runs elections on election day four days a year.

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The other 361 days, the Secretary of State is really operating a customer service function. It's not just about you getting your tags; it's about working with all the interest groups -- the auto dealers, the boat dealers, the ATV guys -- and figuring out how to make their business easier. So if you want to go and buy a car today, because of Terri Land and it started with Candice Miller you can get your license plates right on the premises.

With today's technology, why aren't we figuring out how to be available on Saturdays and Sundays in the places that are doing business? That part of it, that customer service part, you're not just providing a service for the people, but you're providing a service to these businesses that are trying to make a buck.

Q. So you envision that I'll be able to go into Meijer's on a Saturday or Sunday and renew my tags, much like I could buy a fishing or hunting license?

A. Why aren't we thinking about doing partnerships with different entities, whether that's Meijer or any other store? If I can get my hunting license or fishing license at Meijer and I can mail a package at Meijer, why can't we put a kiosk at Meijer for people that can't use a computer or don't have a computer?

Why aren't we looking at those kinds of opportunities? I'm not for closing down branch offices, but we have to think beyond the bricks and mortar today.

Q. On the elections front, are there any changes you want to see happen?

A. I had worked on campaign finance reform because I think that is a hole that needs some beefing up in the Secretary of State's office. We saw where former Sen. Mark Schauer (D-Battle Creek) violated campaign finance law in 2006. It took two years to deal with that kind of complaint.

I'm not talking about going after every single person that has a \$10 or \$15 violation, but I think we need to do a better job of being timely and efficient. I introduced legislation called the shot clock legislation both last term and this term. It's moved through the Senate, and it's in the House. It basically says that the Secretary of State's office has to deal with campaign finance violations in a 60-day period.

The other thing that I did -- legal defense funds prior to my legislation were not transparent. I'm not against having legal defense funds, but I think they should be transparent.

I also think instead of four election days a year, we could do two. That would certainly save taxpayers money, and I'll have legislation to do that. We should also be working to make it faster to go through the lines on Election Day. So, I'm introducing legislation for electronic poll books, so you can swipe a license that has a strip. You don't have to have somebody signing a book. That makes it faster on Election Day.

Q. You've served out your three terms in the House; you're finishing your second term in the Senate -- in your experience here, what one thing would you change?

A. I was lucky enough to come here right when term limits started. I was in the first class to be term limited so I have a different perspective than many where I got to work with people who were more senior in terms of their time here. I think there needs to be more mentoring in Lansing. I think there needs to be time to build relationships in Lansing. The relationships between Democrats and Republicans need to be built better. I don't know the exact solution to that, but one might be to extend the time people are here.

I think the first two years in the House you're just learning where the bathrooms are. You may have taken government classes, but government in Lansing is different.

GCSEye On The Capitol

Leaders Set Targets

Maybe it was the tailgate atmosphere they shared last Saturday at the University of Michigan - Notre Dame football game? Maybe it was the pressure of the clock? Whatever the cause -- Speaker Andy Dillon (D-Redford Twp.) and Senate Majority Leader Mike Bishop (R-Rochester) reached a key budget target agreement on Wednesday.

Essentially, the two agreed that the budget they pass will include \$1.2 billion in cuts with the rest of the state's \$2.8 billion budget deficit being filled in with federal stimulus funds.

The agreement marks an interesting political shift, with Gov. Jennifer Granholm coming out against budget cuts that "would be harmful to our citizens." The \$1.2 billion in cuts will also be difficult for many members of the House Democratic caucus to support making the viability of the budget deal an open question.

Bouchard On Land Pick: 'We're A Force Multiplier'

Republican gubernatorial candidate Mike Bouchard introduced political ally Secretary of State Terri Lynn Land to the media today as his running mate, creating the first-two punch of this relatively young 2010 gubernatorial campaign season.

Bouchard said Land's addition to his ticket essentially doubles the impact of his campaign, adding during his afternoon press conference at the Small Business Association of Michigan (SBAM) headquarters: "We're a force multiplier."

"I'm honored to join Mike's campaign to turn Michigan around and again make it a national leader in job creation," Land said. "His willingness to make the right decisions for Michigan now instead of focusing on the next election is exactly what Michigan needs."

The announcement makes Land the first lieutenant gubernatorial candidate in the '10 race. Land will assist the campaign through fundraising appearances and speaking engagements, but her name will not appear on the August 2010 primary ballot. If Bouchard wins the primary election, Land will need to be selected at the Republican Party's subsequent convention, which would be a near certainty.

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Administration Eyeing DEQ, DNR, Ag 'Super Department'

Gov. Jennifer Granholm is expected to issue an executive order this fall that will merge the Departments of Agriculture, Environmental Quality and Natural Resources, according to comments Lt. Gov. John Cherry made to the *Marquette Mining Journal* earlier this month.

"I don't want to be held to an exact date, but I'm kind of seeing that this fall there will be an executive order that will combine the three departments," Cherry told the *Mining Journal*. "There'll be somebody named to oversee the implementation of that."

Cherry stressed that consolidation wouldn't solve the budget problem, but that's not the primary force behind the streamlining effort, which Cherry was appointed earlier this year to oversee for the administration.

The focus is to make a more efficient state government, he told the *Journal*.

"It shouldn't be three contradictory missions, it should be one mission and bringing all that expertise to bear to advance that mission," he said.

Cherry's comments have ignited some buzz in Lansing, where opinions are split over such a combination. Sen. Michelle McManus (R-Lake Leelanau) said she heard rumors all week that an executive order was imminent, possibly as soon as this week.

Michigan Factoid:

Detroit is the only city in the United States from which you can look south into Canada. (Oh, all right then...the only place excluding Alaska).

--Michigan Trivia and Detroit Facts

As the sponsor of legislation to combine the DEQ and DNR, McManus said she opposes putting the Department of Agriculture (MDA) in the mix without some input and discussion from the groups that would be involved in a combination.

"Agriculture is the only industry that is thriving in this state, and it's disappointing that this administration hasn't recognized that," McManus said. "It's important that this particular department stays at the top of what the administration does with reorganizations, either as a stand-alone department or, if it is combined, highlighted in some fashion."

Week Ahead

Look for fast and furious work within legislative budget conference committees, as the committees take agreed upon targets and fashion budgets to meet the proposed \$1.2 billion in budget cuts.

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