



Friday, March 28, 2008

## **Brock Says Caucus United, Ready To Move Forward**

### **“Centerpiece”**

Despite some grumblings last year from the Senate Democratic caucus after Senate Minority Leader Mark Schauer (D-Battle Creek) announced his bid for Congress, the caucus is united and ready to move this year’s agenda forward.

“Quite frankly, he would not have run if he didn’t have support from the caucus,” said Schauer’s Chief of Staff, Ken Brock.

Several members of the caucus were not on board with Schauer’s announcement to run against U.S. Rep. Tim Walberg (R-Jackson), grumbling to the media that the announcement broke Schauer’s promise that he would not run for Congress if they would choose him as their leader.

Brock said Schauer had not intended to run for the seat when he was running for minority leader. In fact, Schauer was active in trying to recruit former Republican Congressman Joe Schwarz to switch parties and run against Walberg. As the race got closer and it became clear that Schauer would be the best candidate, his advisors, including Brock, started prodding him to run.

Now Schauer’s gearing up for a tough race so caucus members, including Sen. Gretchen Whitmer (D-East Lansing) who has been “very helpful”, have taken on some of Schauer’s duties.

Sen. Buzz Thomas (D-Detroit) is heading up legislative leadership and Sen. Glenn Anderson (D-Westland) is in charge of the caucus’ fundraising. Caucus members have settled into their new roles and are moving forward with a legislative agenda that focuses heavily on investing in early childhood education, Brock said.

“There’s ample research that indicates investment in two, three, four-year olds’ early childhood education pays off multifold later in life in terms of a person’s learning power and lack of other social spending later in life,” Brock said.

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The caucus is pushing for full day kindergarten or expanded Head Start programs for young kids. It's also fighting to get mental health courts in the state, arguing that doing so would provide better assistance for mentally ill people who are in the legal system and would also clear out the state's prisons. This is an issue the Senate Dems have been working on for years.

"With control of the House, we fully expect to make it at least as far as the conference committee," Brock said.

Brock has worked with Schauer since 1996 and has been instrumental in helping Schauer achieve his political goals, but he hasn't decided if he'll follow Schauer to Washington D.C., though he's been asked to do so.

"Whatever he does from here on, I'm sure I'll be involved with him," Brock said. "What that means professionally, only time will tell."

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

#### ***Senate Sends Through Pop-Up***

The Senate passed a bill that would let property owners claim an income tax deduction on their state tax bill if their property taxes are higher than the previous homeowner's.

Supporters of the bill claim that it takes the edge off the "pop-up" tax, a tax hike that occurs when a person buys a home and their property taxes automatically "pop up." The bill gives new homeowners 33-months to take advantage of the offer, which is longer than many people spend in one home.

Some Senate Democrats voted against the bill on the grounds that they didn't have enough time to look at the legislation; however, they weren't necessarily opposed to the concept of the legislation.

#### ***Courts Give Primary The Boot***

Michigan's decision to push its way to the front of the primary line has gotten criticism from just about everyone, but this week it got smacked around by the federal court, which ruled the power play unconstitutional.

Wednesday, U.S. District Court Judge Nancy Edmunds also ruled that the state doesn't have to release primary election information, but if it does, it can't just give the voter lists to the Democrat and Republican parties. The state law that created the Jan. 15 primary included a provision that allowed the parties to get these lists.

Mark Grebner, whose business is selling voter lists, and several other plaintiffs challenged the Jan. 15 primary law in *Green Party v. Secretary of State*. The court case locks up the voter information and, for the time being, prohibits anyone from having access to the records.

### Kilpatrick Slapped With Eight Felonies

Monday, Wayne County Prosecutor Kym Worthy handed Detroit Mayor Kwame Kilpatrick eight felony charges for his alleged cover up of the firing a former deputy police chief, the resulting whistleblower case and a sexual relationship with his former Chief of Staff, Christine Beatty.

The charges include obstruction of justice and perjury and could result in a maximum 15-year sentence for the young mayor.

### Dems Start Election Cycle With 54% Base

Democrats will start this election cycle with a 54 percent base, according to political consultant and list-maker, Mark Grebner.

The new data puts the Dems' starting base 1.3 percent higher than the 2006 election cycle but shows it's still down from the party's peak support in the 1980s. Grebner's numbers show the party is getting more support from higher educated residents, while support from blue-collared workers is on the decline.

#### **Michigan Factoid:**

Before 1848 people who lived in Michigan were called Michiganians. In 1848 Abraham Lincoln jokingly referred to Michiganians as Michiganders. Residents of Michigan now use both terms but still argue about which is correct.

### **The Week Ahead**

#### Both Chambers Out Next Week

With both the House and Senate on spring break next week, look for a long-awaited lull in the action in Lansing.

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