



Friday, April 3, 2009

MANAGEMENT

Nell Kuhnmuench

Michael D. Hawks

Stephen E. Young

Kirk A. Profit

Kenneth Cole

Centerpiece

This week, GCSIntel sat down with Rep. Tory Rocca (R-Sterling Heights). Rocca is in his third term this session and is the minority Vice Chair of the Regulatory Reform Committee.

Following in the shoes of his father and mother, who both served in his current House seat, Rocca is arguably the Republican caucus' most independent member this session. GCSI talked to him about that voting record.

Q. One of the things that has been bandied about quite a bit is this Catastrophic Claims Association debate. You're kind of split on this package. Talk about your position on this a bit?

A. As far as opening the Catastrophic Claims Association to FOIA (Freedom of Information Act) and the Open Meetings Act, even though they are a quasi public entity, I see them as public enough where they should be open to FOIA and the Open Meetings Act, simply because that board meets and has the authority to impose fees on everyone in the state, and that includes my district.

They are just about making law, and they should be open to the Freedom of Information Act. The only bill that I didn't support in that package added more members to the board, and I didn't think we should be adding more political appointees to the board.

Q. Now the session is very short, but right now you appear to be the Ed Gaffney or the John Stewart of the Republicans, siding with the Democrats more than your other caucus members. Talk about that a little bit. Are you changing your views this year?

A. I don't think I'm changing my views. If you look at my voting record last year, it's pretty consistent. If you look at the Michigan Catastrophic Claims Association bills, I voted the same way last year, just a lot of people didn't notice that.

I think it stands in contrast. When you look at the voting board this year, you're seeing the Republicans voting no on some of the bills that most of the caucus, if not all of the caucus voted yes on last time. We're voting on a lot of the bills that we voted on last time that died in the Senate.

When you have one or two voting in a bipartisan manner, there's more of a contrast now because we have more of the caucus voting no on items they voted yes on last time.

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Donald Van Singel

William Zaagman

Erik Hingst

Adrian Hemond

James Miller

Barbara Farrah

Patrick Laughlin

Gary M. Owen

Q. Now, your mother and father were both Democrats, and they were Republicans as well. Do you kind of take a page out of their book in terms of deciding things based on their merit as opposed to just toeing the line?

A. Very much so. I always decide things based on their merit. I have never, ever been guided by partisanship. I've never viewed my job here to be an ideological warrior. You evaluate issues on their merit, and you decide issues how the people of the district would want me to decide them.

I joke about this sometimes, but it's true, I believe the word Representative in my title was not put there by accident. I actually believe I'm supposed to represent my district and that means you do for the most part what they want you to do, obviously guided by your own principles but certainly not guided by partisan politics and not seeing yourself as somebody who has to vote a certain way just because there is an R or a D next to your name.

Q. Have you ever thought about changing to the other party?

A. I've never thought about changing parties. I think I can do my job equally well as a Republican or a Democrat and the partisan part of this job is just ancillary to me. Part of the job is you're affiliated with a party, but I can do equally well regardless of which party.

Q. What's the most important issue for you this session?

A. The most important issue for you this session. For most people, it's tops – it's doing what we can to make Michigan more competitive. We're seeing some positive areas, but when the Big Three let off 20,000 to 30,000 jobs at a time, those good areas don't get seen.

GCSEye On The Capitol

More Budget Cuts Loom

On news from Senate Fiscal Agency Director Gary Olson that revenues are down \$1 billion for fiscal year 2009 -- Governor Jennifer Granholm and her state budget director, Bob Emerson, are planning more cuts in the current budget that ends Sept. 30.

Emerson indicated on Thursday that the state will have no choice but to fill the gaps in the current budget by both cuts and with spending from the \$7 billion federal economic stimulus plan. The budget chief said he'll be taking the next two weeks to determine the proper blend of stimulus cash and cuts.

"The vast majority could be filled with the stimulus money, but that is part of the discussion that we'll be having with the Legislature," Emerson said. "What cuts can we make this late in the fiscal year?"

Lawmaker Begins Cancer Treatment

Rep. Robert Jones (D-Kalamazoo) announced Thursday that he's beginning treatment for esophageal cancer.

The lawmaker said he'll be getting chemotherapy every third week and doesn't anticipate his treatments interfering with his schedule.

"I'm asking for the support of the community, including prayer from the community of faith," Jones said. "There will be some tough days ahead, but God has brought me this far, and God will carry me on."

DPS Status Measure Moves

Legislation that would allow the Detroit Public School System to retain its "First Class" school status until July 2010, passed the House Thursday on a 71 to 38 vote.

Under HB 4047, DPS, as a First Class district, would stave off the establishment of new community college-backed charter schools within the district.

DPS' First Class status is, by statute, dependent on the state's largest school district having an enrollment of at least 100,000 students, a level it fell below more than a year ago. Without its First Class status, Bay Mills Community College and Wayne County Community College could potentially begin sponsoring charter schools (public school academies) in Detroit -- a prospect DPS, its supporters and the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) union want to prevent or limit.

Michigan Factoid:

Malcolm X (Malcolm Little) (1925-1965), a prominent member of the Black Muslims (a black nationalist group), stressed the beauty and value of being black. Malcolm X, who grew up in Lansing, was shot and killed after speaking out against the Black Muslims.

-- Source *Michigan Trivia*

The Week Ahead

Next week begins the Legislature's two-week Easter break.

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