



GCSINTEL



Friday, September 12, 2008

MANAGEMENT
Nell Kuhnmuench
Michael D. Hawks
Stephen E. Young
Kirk A. Profit
Kenneth Cole

Donald Van Singel
William Zaagman
Erik Hingst
Patrick Laughlin
Gary M. Owen

Centerpiece

This week, GCSIntel sat down with Rep. Chuck Moss (R-Birmingham) to talk about his first term in the Michigan legislature and his reflections on state government.

Q. After spending nearly two years in the legislature, what’s your opinion of the body?

A. It’s obvious we’ve got the worst system of government...except for all the others. Sausage and legislation, you don’t want to watch either being made, but both need to be done. I pretty much knew that because I covered it for years so none of it was a big shock. Last September was certainly something I never expected. Last September certainly was an unusual experience. I’ve never seen anything like that from the outside or the inside.

Q. Why the decision to go from watching and analyzing politics to participating?

A. I was minding my own business at home writing smart-alecky articles and yakking on the radio when the City of Birmingham decided to cut down all the trees and widen a street to five lanes. I told the traffic consultant that I thought it was a dumb idea, and she said, ‘You think that because you’re stupid.’ One thing led to another, and I ran for office.

Basically I got involved through a local issue. I’m a local government guy. It was like taking a first sip of beer and the next thing you know, you’re hardcore. I never thought I’d be a member of the legislature. I just wanted to stop them from cutting down all the trees.

Q. As a former journalist turned lawmaker, what do you think about the relationship between government officials and the media?

A. The first thing you’ve got to remember is that the media is not there to be your press agent. The media’s job is not to be my flack. Your job isn’t to make me look good. Your job is to report and tell the people what’s going on.

A Service of GCSI ... Voted Michigan’s #1 Lobby Firm

Part of my job is to communicate to you and be open to your questions. If you start being biased and unfair, that's different. I haven't found that part to be true in Lansing. My job is to be accessible and tell the truth and do what I can. You're not here to make me look good.

Q. What would you like to see accomplished by the end of session?

A. I want to see Michigan get back on the road to recovery. I want to see the tax system made more rational, more sensible. We have to clean up a lot of the institutions and make reforms. We need to stop passing money to failing institutions. That will only give you more failure. We need to lower taxes and costs of state government. We need to do what everyone else has been doing for years. We need to reprioritize. We can't keep raising revenue. Michigan has competition — Indiana, India — we lost the VW plant to Tennessee. We need change. We've just got to start getting it together, and we can't keep having cool slogans and charismatic campaigns.

If we could eliminate the MBT (Michigan Business Tax) surcharge and the tax on gross receipts, that would help. That would send a signal.

Let's start with Corrections, and let's start with benefits. Last year we passed a raise for state employees. Who got three to four percent raises last year in the private sector? Three years before, they got a 10 percent raise. Who got that? Everyone else is downsizing and seeing benefits cut. We're the public servants. We shouldn't be living high on the hog at the expense of our boss. That's where I would start right now. Our budget has gone up a billion dollars a year. Let's do what you do every day. You do it; you can prioritize and live within your means. It's time for Lansing to do it.

Q. Provided you get re-elected, what are your top agenda items for next session?

A. That's been my agenda all along. We're from Birmingham and Oakland County where we did that. We held the line on expenses all through the 90s. When property tax revenues went south, we were ready. Oakland County has been at the forefront of this, and that's where I learned my trade. That's what everyone has to do. Michigan can only keep trying to avoid the reality so long. You can't take in \$10 and spend \$11 or \$12. Not indefinitely.

GCSEye On The Capitol

Senate Republicans Leave Pobur Appointment Alone

Senate Republicans agreed to leave Gov. Jennifer Granholm's appointment of Colleen Pobur to the Liquor Control Commission (LCC) alone.

The caucus had a closed-door discussion on the issue after stalling on the appointment for months. The caucus' leadership claimed to drag its heels on the appointment because Pobur is a personal friend of Granholm. They also questioned her work ethic.

However, during the closed-door meeting, at least two members of the caucus expressed concern over knocking Pobur off the LCC without at least giving her a chance to publicly refute their concerns.

Court Denies Dillon's Recall Appeal

The U.S. 6th Circuit Court of Appeals recently denied House Speaker Andy Dillon's (D-Redford Twp.) appeal to keep the recall election against him off the November ballot.

The court denied a final appeal based on technical grounds. In a 2-1 ruling, the U.S. 6th Circuit Court of Appeals ruled Dillon and Secretary of State Terri Lynn Land didn't first file a stay motion with the district court as required under court rules. Rather, the appeal went directly to the appellate court.

The court added that had the appeal been filed correctly, "We have grave doubts that the requested relief should be granted."

Supremes Block RMGN From Ballot

The state Supreme Court halted the expansive Reform Michigan Government Now's (RMGN) march to the Nov. 4 ballot.

In a 6-1 ruling, the justices said the 19,000-word RMGN, and the 28 sections of the constitution it alters, was just too big. Three justices said it was too big to describe in 100 words on the ballot. Three agreed with the Court of Appeals' opinion that it was too big to be called a constitutional "amendment."

Justice Marilyn Kelly was the only dissenting justice. She said the RMGN should have been allowed to advance to the Board of State Canvassers level before being acted on by either the Court of Appeals or the Supreme Court.

Michigan Factoid:

The world's first international submarine railway tunnel was opened between Port Huron, Michigan and Sarnia, Ontario, Canada in 1891.

-- Source: 50states.com

The Week Ahead

As Gov. Jennifer Granholm heads out to Japan for a three-day trade mission, her third trip to the country, expect to hear announcements of Japanese investments in Michigan toward the middle of the week.

You can also expect continued pressure on lawmakers to reach a deal on energy legislation.

A Service of GCSI ... Voted Michigan's #1 Lobby Firm

Disclaimer

This newsletter is a client service provided by GCSI. The news and views contained in this newsletter are based on the research and reporting of Michigan Information & Research Service, Inc (MIRS, www.mirsnews.com) and do not necessarily represent the views, opinions or strategic advice of GCSI. This newsletter is presented to you as one more resource for inside information and insights into state government happenings. For specific questions about politics, personalities, legislation, policy and strategies please always contact your GCSI lobbyist.