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2010: IT'S NEVER TOO EARLY TO START THINKING ABOUT THE RACE

by Ray Richardson

It's never too early to start speculating on the successor to Governor Baldacci. There are a number of names being bounced around, some well-known, some not-so-well-known.

Over the next several issues, I will present the obvious and not-so-obvious names being bantered around, in no particular order. I'll look at their strengths and their weaknesses and I will look for your feedback. The next Governor will face many challenges regarding Maine's future. Jump

starting our economy, which will surely continue to struggle over the current lack of vision for Maine, will be job number one ... job number one along with dealing with our continuing energy crisis.

Let's look at some of the more obvious names being thrown around first in this issue.

Josh Tardy, current House Republican Leader:

Josh is an obvious choice. He is smart, conservative, well-connected and ambitious. He has led the House Republicans for the last two years and is likely to

retain that role for the next two. He has a good working relationship with the media in Maine and knows how to work a crowd. Josh is likable, personable and hard working.

Strengths: Tardy is the House Republican Leader, currently in the minority but with a minor miracle (okay, major miracle) this November, he could be the



*The Blaine House - Across from the State Capitol
Maine's Gubernatorial Residence*

Speaker of the House. Tardy is well-connected and well-liked by the Republican political establishment in Maine and Washington. He has a good relationship with
(continued on page 7)

2010: IT'S NEVER TOO EARLY TO START THINKING ABOUT THE RACE

(continued from page 2)

Senator Collins that could be very helpful in a general election campaign. His position as the Republican House Leader puts him in a position to make news and keep himself in front of Maine people.



Josh Tardy

Tardy can raise money and we all know how important that is to a campaign.

When properly focused, he is able to clearly articulate a vision for Maine with honesty that appeals to the average citizen.

Additionally, while a traditional conservative, Tardy is not seen as a threatening conservative, meaning his appeal in a general election would be broader than someone with a more narrowly defined base.

Weaknesses:

Josh has developed a somewhat deserved reputation for getting along a little too well with the other side. Josh is a deal maker, learned from years of being a defense attorney.

Tardy is also pulled in many directions as he has various business interests throughout the state. Running for Governor as a Republican will require absolute focus and he must have the right people around him to make sure he is not pulled in too many directions.

Let's face it, Tardy's biggest problem running for Governor in 2010 may be the

Maine Senate. If the Republicans gain the majority, that will put Carol Weston in as Senate President and that will not bode well for Tardy.

The House and Senate Republicans have not worked well together in recent times, 2006 election effort as a prime example and from my perspective, I think a lot of it has to do with the antagonistic manner in which the Senate Republicans deal with the House Republicans. Weston has her own agenda and if accomplishing it means throwing Tardy under the bus, under the bus he will go. That kind of tactic was first evident when she nominated Karl Turner to be Senate Republican leader over Paul Davis four years ago.

If the Republicans win the Senate, but do not take control of the House, Tardy will be battling on two fronts in Augusta and that will not help his chances as various individuals jockey for position in the open-seat gubernatorial race.

Conclusion:
If Tardy can survive the next two years as minority leader in the Maine House without being too battered by his colleagues and makes a clear determination that he really wants to be Governor, he will make a formidable candidate.

He has what it takes to lead this state, I have seen evidence

of it firsthand. He simply needs to trust the right people, be extremely focused and trust his instincts.

He knows where Maine must go, he knows what we are capable of (reality) in transforming our government and he can be an effective advocate for job creation around the state and for Maine around the country.

John Richardson, former Speaker of the House and current Commissioner of the DECD:

Richardson is an interesting candidate. His time as Speaker was widely hailed as a success, coming on the heels of Pat Colwell and with the benefit of the just finished Glen Cummings tenure. Some in the House have said they long for the days when Richardson was Speaker.



John Richardson

Richardson appeared to take the DECD job because it would put an exclamation point on his efforts to bring jobs to Maine, but he largely been frozen out by Baldacci's staff on many issues. Although the Governor still seems personally supportive of Richardson and may in fact want him to be his successor, far too many of the Baldacci staff are Steven Rowe people and they are none to keen on a Governor Richardson administration.

Strengths:

Richardson is a hustler and a deal maker. He is seen as

someone who is fair to the other side and that perception is pushed along regardless of its veracity. He has strong union ties from his many years of representing various unions, specifically the police unions around the state. They will work hard to help one of "their own" occupy the state's top spot.

He has a sharp political mind and recognize a trend and capitalize on it even when it works against his agenda. He was the architect of the big House Democrat win in 2006, largely by out-republicanizing the Republicans. He convinced his caucus to run on a pro-business, efficient government platform even when they had no intention to govern as such.

He has built a lot of loyalty amongst the rank-and-file democrats around Maine, specifically the mid-coast region. He knows how to raise money, is very focused on the next step and has the ego to withstand the personal assault he will undergo in a democrat primary.

If he can find a way to not be completely marginalized by Governor Baldacci's staff in the next two years and receive some credit for job creation he might actually win the primary.

Weaknesses:

He is not Steven Rowe and (continued on page 9)

2010: IT'S NEVER TOO EARLY TO START THINKING ABOUT THE RACE

(continued from page 7)

the liberal establishment in the Democrat party love Steven Rowe, the current Attorney General. Some of that may be mitigated if Glen Cummings enters the gubernatorial race and splits the Portland liberal vote.

Richardson is slick, meaning he looks the part, acts the part and talks the part. That will likely not play well in rural Maine where people are tired of politics and politicians as usual. Richardson seems to want the job too much and that type of ambition is usually not worn well.

He is a middle of the roader politically which means the left will not trust him and the conservative members of his party will find him suspect.

Conclusions:

Richardson has a fine line to walk in the next two years. If he appears too ambitious for the Blaine House, the Governor's staff will bury him. Further, he cannot afford to alienate the Governor personally, as Baldacci will have

considerable say in who the Democrat party nominee is in 2010.

Richardson should run better in the north than Rowe as rural folks tend to be more conservative than urban folks. If Cummings enters the

race (this remains to be seen), his split of the liberal vote will work in Richardson's favor.

A Tardy-Richardson matchup would offer Maine a clear and interesting choice for Governor.

I will preview additional contenders in the coming issues. In the next edition, I will take a look at John Jenkins the Mayor of Auburn and Steven Rowe, the current Attorney General of Maine.

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