

Bernard Schoenburg Column

Published Sunday, November 26, 2006

Brady campaigning for 'rebirth of Republican Party'

In some ways, it seems, the campaign of state Sen. **BILL BRADY**, R-Bloomington, has never stopped.

Brady, whose 44th Senate District includes some of eastern Sangamon County, ran hard for governor in the Republican primary last spring, placing third in a field of five. But he ran a more civil race than some - and for that was famously exempted by **JUDY BAAR TOPINKA**, the winner of the nomination, when she said in the heat of battle that her GOP opponents were "morons."

Brady also campaigned for Topinka after the primary, making it clear he thought she would be much better for the state than another term under Democratic Gov. **ROD BLAGOJEVICH**. Some conservatives, including **JACK ROESER**, head of the Family Taxpayers Network, actually argued that a Blagojevich win would be better for Republicans than a Topinka victory, because a new GOP could then be built on the ashes of that election.

Anyway, since his primary loss, Brady's campaign Web site has continued to make known his thoughts, including an essay called "Taking the Republican Party back to the people."

"Tomorrow's Republican leaders must respect and stay true to mainstream conservative values," he argued in the piece, "but they must work to find common ground that unites people.

"Tomorrow's Republican leaders much be ethically pure, untainted by even the perception of corrupt behavior. ...

"We must launch ongoing efforts and internal reforms if we are ever to bring any shade of (Republican) red back to the political hue of Illinois. We can start by giving Republican primary voters the right to elect their party officials. We can demand that party leaders who divide rather than unite step aside. We must move beyond the blindness of the old guard to the promise of energetic new leaders with innovative new ideas."

In line with his view that it's time for new leaders (presumably including himself), Brady issued a statement after Illinois House GOP Leader **TOM CROSS**' recent call for legislation to allow the GOP State Central Committee to remove **BOB KJELLANDER** from the Republican National Committee.

"I would hope that Committeeman Kjellander recognizes that his position stands in the way of rebuilding the Republican Party and agrees to voluntarily step down," Brady's statement said.

Kjellander, a Springfield consultant, has made millions of dollars representing companies that do business with the state, some of them with the administration of Gov. Blagojevich. Kjellander, who is treasurer of the RNC, has said he's done nothing wrong. He's also given no indication that he intends to step down before his term is over.

Brady wasn't always so adamant about the ouster of Kjellander, but he said he turned the corner on Kjellander during an editorial board meeting at the Chicago Tribune before the primary election.

"In that meeting, they said, 'Would the party be better off if Bob were to step down?' and I said 'Clearly,'" Brady said.

Issues surrounding Kjellander have become a distraction for the Illinois GOP, Brady said, likening Kjellander's situation with that of outgoing U.S. Secretary of Defense **DONALD RUMSFELD**.

"Whether you agreed or disagreed with Don Rumsfeld, it was good for the national party that he stepped down," Brady told me.

Brady, 45, said he is trying to "help rebirth the Republican Party" in his statements and writings. He also rejects the notion, propagated by some on the right, that Brady actually entered the primary to siphon votes away from fellow conservative **JIM OBERWEIS** and thereby ensure a Topinka win.

"It's lunacy ... to think I would spend 120 hours a week away from family and friends and business for over a year, invest tens of thousands of my personal money into a race to be someone else's stooge," said Brady.

He also thinks - contrary to some opinion in the party - that a conservative can win statewide office in Illinois.

"Absolutely," he said to the question. "The people of Illinois are looking for someone who is honest, has a track record and they can trust their judgment. Yes, I'm conservative, but I'm not in such a way that I alienate people who may not be as conservative of a Republican as I am."

The big statewide race in 2008 will be for U.S. Senate. U.S. Sen. **DICK DURBIN**, D-Ill., probably will seek another term. Brady could try to unseat Durbin.

"All summer long and through the election, people have asked me to consider it, and I said I will," Brady said of that race. "Clearly, I've told them, my focus is on being

governor of the state someday. I think that's where I can help of the state of Illinois the most and help the Republican Party."

However, Brady also said he thinks Durbin - the second-ranking Democrat in the U.S. Senate - is politically vulnerable.

"Durbin can be beat," Brady said. "He has aligned himself nationally in a way that I think he is as out of touch as he's ever been with Illinois."

Durbin, at an appearance in Springfield last week, said it's a little early to talk about the next campaign.

"I would just say that Senator Brady is a nice fellow, and he has just read the opening lines of the playbook that's given to everybody when they're even thinking about running," Durbin said. "And so let's wait."

Brady said he has about \$250,000 in personal debt and \$400,000 in bank debt from his race for governor, but if he decides on another race, "I'm confident I'll be able to raise enough money to run for whatever I need to run for."

It won't be a surprise if Brady - who is in the middle of his four-year Senate term - turns up on another ballot in the not-too-distant future.

Interesting dinner

A Sept. 25 meal attended by new U.S. Attorney **RODGER HEATON** of the Central District of Illinois got significantly more attention than a dinner usually does.

Chicago Sun-Times columnist **MARK BROWN** wrote last week about the dinner, which took place at the Sangamo Club in Springfield. The dinner party included Kjellander; **BILL CELLINI**, who is treasurer of the Sangamon County GOP and also a big player in state politics; former U.S. Attorney **BILL ROBERTS**, now managing partner of the large Hinshaw & Culbertson law firm and one of those who spoke at Heaton's swearing-in; and Associate Circuit Judge **ESTEBAN SANCHEZ**.

Brown noted that the names of Cellini and Kjellander surfaced later in court documents in the Teachers' Retirement System kickback scandal being investigated by the Chicago U.S. attorney's office (not Heaton's Springfield-based office).

Cellini is called "Individual A" in the corruption indictment of **ANTOIN "TONY" REZKO**, a fundraiser for Gov. Blagojevich. Kjellander was identified as "Individual K" in the corruption plea agreement of **STUART LEVINE**, a former member of the TRS board. Neither Kjellander nor Cellini has been charged with wrongdoing.

Heaton at the time was still interim U.S. attorney - his appointment was confirmed by the U.S. Senate on Sept. 29 and his commission was signed by President Bush on Oct. 4.

As the interim officeholder, according to spokeswoman **SHARON PAUL**, Heaton was trying to meet with community and political leaders to get them to know him. That effort included meetings with staffers from at least six congressional offices and at least six members of Congress itself, including House Speaker **DENNIS HASTERT**, R-Plano, Paul said. Heaton also met with "several state legislators, dozens of sheriffs from both parties (and) dozens of police chiefs," she said, as well as all federal judges in the district and senior members of the Department of Justice.

Heaton has a record that includes corruption investigations involving both Democrats and Republicans, Paul said.

Paul said Heaton is "not a politician and wasn't known in political circles," but was still subject to Senate confirmation.

Even **PATRICK FITZGERALD**, the Chicago U.S. attorney overseeing the TRS probe, was the choice of former U.S. Sen. **PETER FITZGERALD**, R-Ill., who made no bones about wanting to name someone from out of state, she said.

"It was still political, but it was just a different process," Paul said.

Whether that dinner would have occurred had the names of Cellini and Kjellander surfaced earlier is another question. Paul said Heaton "would make every effort to avoid any perception of a conflict of interest or any sort of improper meeting."

Heaton is not a member of the Sangamo Club, and I'm not sure who paid for the meal.

Roberts said this of the meeting: "I had dinner with some old friends, and that's really all I care to say about it. I had duck."

Moats leaves job

TEX MOATS, a longtime horse trainer, has left his job with the state as bureau chief of county fairs and horse racing.

Moats, 63, of Fairfield, left the \$67,608 job early this month. He started in April 2003. He had contributed \$1,100 to Gov. Blagojevich's campaign in 2002.

JEFF SQUIBB, spokesman for the Department of Agriculture, said Moats left on Nov. 6.

Moats was inducted into the Illinois Harness Horsemen Association Hall of Fame last year.

He began his horse-training career in 1969 in Fairfield with three horses in his stable. Working with two daughters, Moats ended up training 35-45 horses per year for a quarter century.

Moats' state job remains vacant. There is no timetable to find a replacement, Squibb said.

Oops

The job title I listed for **DEBBIE CIMAROSSA**, a possible aldermanic candidate, was wrong in a recent column. She is assistant vice president in human resources at Horace Mann. My apologies.

Bernard Schoenburg is political columnist for The State Journal-Register. He can be reached at 788-1540 or Bernard.Schoenburg@sj-r.com.