

One Punishing Primary

My candidate won the Republican primary to run for re-election to the House of Delegates, God's Country (a.k.a. The Commonwealth of Virginia). The opponent was an outspoken advocate for The Great Transportation Sales Tax Scam of '02. His tax team, the fat cats, spent \$2.2m against ours, the people, and \$40k. We won 3 to 1 in our district last November. My delegate stood up against the big boys of both parties and insider businesses. He was challenged in a primary election last week. No good deed goes unpunished.

Late this February the designated tax and spend challenger from Team Fat Cat took a stand on his reluctance and decided not to run after all. The second string opponent, son-in-law to great wealth, had to hustle to buy an extra house in the same city to be a 'legal' resident of our district. Then, the money started to flow. Flyer after flyer touted the upstart's accomplishments (he is a cub scout den leader) and our incumbents sins (his yogurt business folded beneath a national chain ten years ago). They skillfully built a coalition of everyone with a grievance; the local elected officials terrified of losing their jobs to modernization, lawyers fearful of a public defender's office cutting cash flow, and a local lady pol's resentment over losing a close election without enough 'help'. They worked hard to find allies among other enemies. They may have recruited the fellow whose car door was bumped by our delegate in a parking lot in 1986.

The new guys made much of their 'lifelong' Republican running against a populist Republican-turned-Democrat-turned-Republican – incumbent Republican legislator. Yet, on the flip side, their candidate's elected Democrat official wife promised to deliver all the Democrats needed to win an open primary. The lovely couple supported Democrat fundraisers for our state-wide race in '01. Oops. Also, the challenger reversed his stand on the Transportation Tax Scam, but said further tax cuts required off-setting tax increases. Double oops. Plus, he said he was NOT a social conservative, but wouldn't say why not. Oh, he was against partial-birth abortion, homosexual marriage and witch burning, but that's all he would share on the issues. The challenger outspent the incumbent big time but lost the primary on June 10th. Our delegate won 2 to 1.

The losers bitterly complained about "crazy psycho religious zealots". They want my head as an elected Republican Party official (two positions). I look forward to the political fight.

Two years ago I helped our present delegate unseat a mendacious, clueless, amoral Republican one-termer. It was one of a handful of incumbent defeats in Virginia since Reconstruction. There was an attempt at retribution after that election which dissipated as a fog without principle.

I am so blessed to have my political enemies (whom I do not hate, nary a one). I don't respect the quality of their thinking, nor do I admire anything about them. I pray for them – when I remember. So, I love the losers calling us names. Seriously, I entreat the invective of people who can't name one issue where our delegate's and my stand is not that of the majority of the people in our district.

The incumbents minus one won Republican primaries across Virginia. But, victory wasn't just the power of incumbency. Conservatives challenged from the Left won outright. Incumbents threatened from the Right fell all over themselves to run as true conservatives.

Now, some are looking for payback against uppity Conservatives. Rarely does

the fat lady sing in politics. Yet, it's great to be part of the process. Working to deliver votes for fiscal and social conservatives is its own reward. We beat the money and power of these wannabe lords and masters time and again in Tidewater Virginia. The passion of our worldview fuels us. Our commitment, our fealty, or wisdom in faith and experiences in life keep us more humble than our pride would like. My fellow partisans and I know we lose elections sometimes, but we determine to try our best. It's the trying that counts.

James Atticus Bowden