

A Very Pleasing Virginia Primary

Journalists, writers who understand history much like fruit flies, think Virginia's Republican primary was a ringing defeat for the anti-tax conservatives. The primary was only one skirmish in a long campaign. It was more of a first fight, like Big Bethel (1861), than climatic battle, like Gettysburg (1865). There are many more political battles to go to determine if 'Republican' in Virginia means limited government and lower taxes, like the Republican Party of Virginia creed says, or not. (I leave it the reader to determine which political party wears blue or gray to support their cause in my metaphor). Virginians for whom 'Republican' is the adjective modifying their 'Conservative' noun found it a very pleasing primary.

The Virginia Conservative Action PAC sponsored six candidates to run against the incumbents and one open seat of seventeen House of Delegates RINOs who voted for Democrat Mark Warner's largest tax increase in history. The candidates were youngsters of good heart, but lacking stature for sure. Yet, one challenger won and the open seat was taken. A couple more came close. In Virginia turning out an incumbent is something special. Once elected, the Old Dominion holds onto politicians with the same loyalty King Charles II recognized. Ask Democrat Congressman Rick Boucher. At this rate, RINOs in the House will be replaced by Reagan Republicans in a mere fourteen years. No problem.

Furthermore, no candidate ran on the promise to raise taxes. Not that running as a Conservative inhibits RINOism in office, but it says something about their voting constituency. Likewise, every one of the six state-wide candidates ran as social, defense and fiscal conservatives. In fact, the big debates were about who was the more trustworthy tax cutter in each race. The laughable irony was Baril and Connaughton swearing fealty to tax cuts while being bankrolled and endorsed by the bigger, more government, higher taxes RINOs and their government client supporters.

The Fitch phenomenon is a caution to Jerry Kilgore's campaign platform. Getting 18% of the vote in a Party primary after the nomination is sewed up tighter than George Allen's favorite football, is significant. These weren't the Russell Potts voters from the more Liberal social issue GOP. The protest votes for Fitch were from the base of the Party. Not good for November. Especially, if Kilgore continues to run on an un-elected, regional government with taxing authority, which Virginians defeated at the polls twice in the past seven years.

The uninspiring, less than exciting, campaign for Honest Reform is only part of the dampening of voter turn out. I've been told in the 7-11 and Farm Fresh by Old GOP Regulars that they're taking time out from Party politics. They're thoroughly disgusted with weak U.S. Senate Republicans this year and apostate Virginia General Assembly Republicans from last year's tax increase. Since Kilgore supported all incumbents and doesn't offer a tax rollback, but a poor meddling with the local issue of property taxes, and all candidates 'swear' they are conservative, why bother voting in the primary?

Which begs the question why bother voting in November? Republicans were key to the

tax increase. Lt. Gov. Tim Kaine is running as the same tax-cutting conservative as Gov. Mark Warner. What is the difference, really? So, Kaine is a Liberal. He got elected for Commonwealth-wide office. The bumper sticker – Liberal – will not defeat one. Only real issues matter, like illegal immigration and state Medicaid mandates. Gov. Mark Warner understands issues beat labels alone because he was, is and will be Liberal but will run as a ‘Moderate’ for President.

That Presidential race in '08 and setting up the Congressional races in '06 will complicate the campaign to November. Gov. Warner has to have Kaine win to fuel his run for President. Sen. (and ex-Gov.) Allen doesn't have to have Kilgore win, but it would be helpful. Both national party committees and their big money are coming to the Commonwealth. We will see if they learn the local political issues that drive voting wedges - like Blacks in Hampton angry at the local White Democrats running City Council who fired the black city manager. Or, will they try to put national issues up for referendum?

It all makes for an interesting election season across Virginia. This pleasing primary made modest gains for Conservatives. No unexpected losses were suffered. The tax-and-spend Republican incumbents are welcomed to think they're bullet proof. There's a Fredericksburg, Second Manassas and Chancellorsville coming up in Virginia Republican politics. Guess who wins?

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