

House of Delegates, county commissioner endorsements

Wednesday, Sept. 6, 2006

House of Delegates— District 28 Democrats

Since 2002, Charles County's team of elected leaders in Annapolis has seen significant upheaval. Charles County lost two of its most respected and seasoned lawmakers when Thomas E. "Tim" Hutchins (R) left the House to take jobs in Gov. Robert L. Ehrlich Jr.'s administration. Hutchins, a Republican, is now superintendent of the Maryland State Police, and Van. T. Mitchell, a Democrat, is principal deputy secretary in the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene.

The loss of Hutchins and Mitchell proves that Charles County needs to have experienced representatives in the House of Delegates.

In the Democratic primary for the House of Delegates, Sen. Thomas "Mac" Middleton announced earlier this year that he would form a slate with incumbents Del. Murray D. Levy (D) and Del. Sally Y. Jameson (D) and political newcomer Gregory Billups (D). Middleton's effort to diversify Charles County's representation in Annapolis is noted with the inclusion of Billups, an African-American businessman and civic activist from Waldorf.

Charles County Democrats, however, deserve better than machine-style politics, and Billups has shown that he needs to learn more about the issues facing Charles County.

We believe Levy, Jameson and Peter Murphy (D) are the best choices in the primary.

As Mitchell's replacement, Levy has made a seamless transition to the House of Delegates after 18 years spent as a Charles County commissioner — 10 of those years as commissioners' president. Levy's fiscal acumen has earned him a spot on the powerful House Appropriations Committee and the respect of the Democratic Party's leadership.

After four years in the House, Jameson has come into her own on the

House Economic Matters Committee and as an advocate for Southern Maryland. Jameson has faced questions about her dual role as executive director of the Charles County Chamber of Commerce and a member of the House, but the General Assembly is a “citizen legislature,” where members have jobs outside of politics. Her deep roots in Charles County and commitment to transportation and education improvements qualify her for another term.

As the Southern Maryland liaison to U.S. Sen. Paul Sarbanes (D) for the past three years, Murphy knows his way around local, state and federal governments. Known for his soft-spoken, measured style, Murphy has built his reputation on his commitment to public service and strong ties to community groups throughout the county.

We applaud Murphy’s diligence and not being daunted by Middleton’s “Team Charles County.”

House of Delegates— District 29A Democrats

The Democrats will pick between incumbent Del. John F. Wood Jr. and challenger Clare C. Whitbeck in this contest to represent northern St. Mary’s and a small piece of Charles County in the Maryland House of Delegates. Although Whitbeck is running a spirited campaign, the endorsement goes to Wood.

Wood is a conservative Democrat sometimes out of step with his own party’s leaders in Annapolis. He is as likely to be praised by Gov. Robert L. Ehrlich Jr. and other Republicans as by his fellow Democrats. But that is precisely what makes him a uniquely effective representative for Southern Maryland.

He speaks for a great many Southern Marylanders in his district and beyond and is at times a key player in matters that are important to this region.

Charles County commissioners

There are four contested races in the primary for spots on the board of county commissioners.

Allan R. Smith is our recommendation for commissioners’ president in the Republican primary.

Smith has served as a commissioner since first being appointed to the board in 2001. He was then elected to his current District 3 seat in 2002. Smith is facing opposition in the primary from James M.G. Coffey, in his first foray into the political arena.

Smith's experience on the board puts him ahead of his opponent.

Smith has earned a reputation as a hard-working, shoot-from-the-hip politician, always willing to speak his mind. He regularly holds town meetings in his district to keep abreast of issues of concern to his constituents. And he is often praised for following up on problems that are brought to his attention — whether, for example, it's a streetlight out in a neighborhood or a parent having a problem with the school system.

Smith is likely to face incumbent Wayne Cooper in the general election, where the differences in the leadership styles of these two men will take center stage.

Sam Graves gets our nod in the District 1 Democratic primary.

A former police officer with an impressive list of community activities, including serving as head of the local Christmas in April chapter, Graves has a real grasp of the issues facing the citizens of Charles County. He served 28 years as a police officer which kept him in touch with the community. That experience could bring a new perspective to the board as the county deals with ever-important public safety issues. He has a solid background of professional and civic experience.

In the District 2 Democratic primary, Edith J. Patterson is an easy choice. Her career and involvement with local groups, coupled with her time spent on the board of education and the Democratic Central Committee, have provided her with an impressive resume. Patterson's appointment as a commissioner in 2005 made her the first African-American commissioner in the county's history. She has brought to the board a much-needed voice for a growing segment of the county's population. She has a reputation for being fair, open and honest.

The Republican primary in District 3 has drawn a lot of attention, if only for the number of candidates seeking the GOP nomination. Four people are seeking the spot held by Al Smith, who is running for commissioners' president. And all four — most of whom are political

newcomers — have brought great energy to their campaigns.

It's difficult to get noticed in a race with so many candidates. But Jim Howard Thompson got our attention. A grocery store employee for 29 years and a past candidate for school board, Thompson is very knowledgeable on school issues. His common-sense approach to issues facing Charles County would be a welcome addition to the board.

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