

U.S. House race a better fit for PV's Parker

The mayor of Paradise Valley's quixotic run for governor is over. A cascade of dominoes has pushed him into a race that's a more comfortable fit.

U.S. Rep. John Shadegg's surprise announcement that he would not seek another term opened an escape hatch for Mayor Vernon Parker. This week, he announced he was dropping his exploratory committee in the governor's race and would instead seek the Republican nomination in the 3rd House District.

Despite brave talk from his associates, Parker was destined to be a minor candidate in the GOP gubernatorial race. That race is between Gov. Jan Brewer, a legendary campaigner, and state Treasurer Dean Martin, who has instant name recognition and solid conservative credentials. Both have won statewide campaigns. No matter how compelling Parker's story is, he wasn't going to get past either of those two.

That's why it seemed that Parker's true intent was to build name recognition for the day in two or four years that Shadegg chose not to seek re-election. Shadegg's surprise announcement merely moved up the timetable.

It also gave Parker a campaign in which he can be competitive, taking on three legislators who, like him, will be making their first pitch to most of the voters in the district.

The mayor can make a legitimate argument for remaining mayor, something he could not have done had he launched a statewide campaign. A congressional race is more geographically compact, allowing Parker to stay closer to home.

"He feels strongly about fulfilling the two-year commitment he made" to serve as mayor, a term that ends in June, spokesman Jason Rose said. "Whether he will continue on the council after that remains open for discussion."

Parker has served the town well, but if he's serious about this race, he should follow the example of Sen. Jim Waring. The Phoenix Republican is leaving the state Senate to give all his attention to the congressional campaign. That is more fair to his constituents, who aren't left wondering how much attention they're getting.

Scottsdale switch

Election jockeying also continues in Scottsdale.

Former City Councilman Dennis Robbins last week filed paperwork to run for a council seat rather than the state House position he had earlier filed for. The council race now includes three incumbents, two former council members and one newcomer, an immigration lawyer.

Meanwhile, businesswoman and blogger Paula Pennypacker joined nine other Republicans in a packed legislative District 8 House race.

There had been speculation that if Robbins dropped his legislative bid to run for the council, incumbent Councilman Bob Littlefield would reverse gears and jump into a House race in which he would easily lead in name recognition.

Littlefield heard those rumors, too, but said there is nothing to them. Once he made up his mind to seek re-election, Littlefield said, he wasn't changing course.

That's good. The council race is shaping up as a referendum on the council's direction. Littlefield is a strong ally of Mayor Jim Lane, so his presence in the election will make it easier to decipher the voters' will.

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