

Lucido, Chirkun eye coveted House seats

By Chad Setweski, The Macomb Daily

Friday, January 24, 2014



Macomb County's term-limited state House seats represent the political plums of the 2014 campaign season and two of those three incumbent-free races have already produced frontrunners.

An open seat in northern Macomb that will be vacated by Rep. Pete Lund, a Shelby Township Republican, is targeted by another Pete who is a Republican from Shelby. Pete Lucido, a well-known attorney and a community activist, is the first candidate to step forward.

In Roseville, term-limited Rep. Harold Haugh, the city's former mayor, has endorsed the current mayor, John Chirkun, as his successor. Both are Democrats.

In western Warren, Democratic Rep. Jon Switalski must step down after six years in office but the field of candidates seeking to fill his 28th District seat remains surprisingly uncertain just four months before the filing deadline.

Among those mentioned as possible contenders are: county Commissioner Toni Mocer; county assistant prosecutor Derek Miller, son of former longtime state senator Art Miller; and several city council members.

In this Democratic-leaning territory, the August primary election could decide the race. The November general election likely will have even less impact in the contests for open seats where Lucido and Chirkun are competing.

In the heavily Republican 36th House District (Washington and Bruce Townships, most of Shelby Township, and Romeo), Lucido is the first candidate to file. Political observers expect Shelby Township Clerk Stan Grot, a former Macomb GOP chairman, to throw his hat into the ring. But Lucido said he has seen no indications so far that Grot is gearing up for a run.

A successful attorney and the founder of one of Macomb County's largest law firms, Lucido said he was motivated to run for the Legislature because of the Michigan economy's inability to keep talented graduates in the state. His daughter, Nina, who is getting ready to graduate from the University of Michigan, is likely to move out of state in search of a job.

“She told me, ‘What applies in this state is not a good life, a decent life, a decent wage,’” said Lucido, who holds four college degrees. “What applies now is that she has got to go away and find an opportunity.”

In fact, Nina may become a key part of the Lucido campaign as father and daughter plan to film a fireside chat about Michigan’s economic conditions and make it available to voters on DVD.

Lucido, 53, will also emphasize his activism in civic groups and chambers of commerce and his 2003 induction into the Macomb County Foundation’s Hall of Fame. The candidate, who has never held public office, is also the founder and publisher of Macomb Now Magazine.

Chirkun offers a very different background to the voters of the 22nd House District, which is comprised of Roseville and most of eastern Warren. He is entering his sixth year as mayor and previously served 13 years on the Roseville City Council. Chirkun, 61, retired in 2004 after 28 years with the Wayne County Sheriff’s Department.

The heavily Democratic House seat, with a decades-long history tied to Roseville City Hall, was previously held by former Roseville city clerk Nick Ciaramitaro, former Roseville councilman Michael “Mickey” Switalski, and Haugh. Chirkun said those ties were valuable to the constituency.

“Everybody who went up there (to Lansing) from Roseville has had valuable city government experience,” he said. “I hope to be able to open the eyes of legislators who don’t understand the needs of the cities.”

So far, Chirkun is the lone candidate who has filed.

On the issues, Lucido and Chirkun both express skepticism about the \$350 million deal announced on Wednesday by Gov. Rick Snyder to help bankrupt Detroit keep the Institute of Arts intact and to help revive the city’s pension funds.

“If, as Snyder said, it’s not a bailout, then where does he plan to put those dollars?” Lucido said, indicating that direct allocations to the DIA and the pension funds are preferable, though not free of legal challenges. “If that money just goes into the general fund, we need to know where it’s going to be allocated. We need transparency.”

Chirkun said he understands the need for a Detroit comeback to keep the southeast Michigan region strong but many communities outside of the inner city need help paying for police protection and roads after many years of revenue sharing cuts by Lansing.

“I’m not real pleased,” he said. “I’d rather see that money going to the ‘inner-ring’ suburbs rather than to the Detroit pension fund.”

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