

commentary

from other pens...

GOP faces challenge holding governor seats

Republicans are determined to provide a potent political base for President Bush's 2004 re-election campaign by retaining governors' seats this fall in big industrial swing states they now control.

The evidence at this point suggests the GOP faces an uphill climb in four of those states — Illinois, Michigan, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin.

"My goal is a strong political foundation for 2004," says Connecticut Gov. John Rowland, chairman of the Republican Governors Association. He has said he is more interested in victories in major strategic states than in the overall number of seats Republicans hold.

Republicans have a big job protecting their current 27-21 lead. Two states have independents — Maine and Minnesota — and have elections for open seats this year. Of the states with elections in 2002, 23 seats are now held by Republicans and 11 by Democrats.

Republicans are favored to re-elect incumbents in three of the four biggest states — Florida, New York and Texas — but have stumbled in their early efforts to oust Democrat Gray Davis in California, the biggest prize.

Republicans have not given up on their California nominee, conservative businessman Bill Simon, despite his campaign's financial problems and a scandal surrounding his investment firm.

The bigger challenge for Republicans is hanging onto the governors' seats in the next tier of states, where their dominance is threatened by economic woes and a public sentiment for change.

In Ohio, incumbent Republican Bob Taft is the favorite to win re-election. Democrats have an opportunity to replace Republicans in Illinois, Michigan, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin — states won by Democratic presidential nominee Al Gore in 2000.

To strengthen Bush's position on the electoral map, Republicans would love to hold onto the governors' seat in some of those states.

"Political organizations statewide are built around governors," Rowland said in a recent interview.

Maryland Gov. Parris Glendening said the races in the big industrial states are "a clear starting point for the race to the White House."

"Most of these states are very close in presidential elections, normally won by 2 or 3 percentage points," said Glendening, chairman of the Democratic Governors Association.

B.J. Thornberry, executive director of the Democrats' group, said voters "do get party fatigue, and I think you're probably seeing some of that in these states."

She and Rowland both said having a governor was valuable for a party's ability to raise money, communicate its message and mobilize voters.

Privately, Republicans say they are very concerned about Illinois, where they have held the governor's mansion for the past quarter century. The scandals enveloping the current GOP administration combined with GOP nominee Jim Ryan's tough task of uniting the party has given Democrat Rod Blagojevich a decided edge, most analysts agree.

In Michigan, Democrat Jennifer Granholm, the state's attorney general, offers a clear contrast after a dozen years of incumbent Republican John Engler. She appears to have the advantage over Lt. Gov. Dick Posthumus.

In Pennsylvania, former Philadelphia Mayor Ed Rendell, the Democrat, is off to a strong start. Republicans are likely to pour heavy support to their nominee, Attorney General Mike Fisher.

In Wisconsin, incumbent Republican Scott McCallum likely faces a tough challenge, once Democrats pick a nominee. McCallum has battled budget woes since replacing popular Gov. Tommy Thompson, now in the Bush Cabinet.

The big industrial swing states are important in the context of the 2004 presidential campaign, said Rowland, the Connecticut governor.

Those states will offer a preview of the coming national campaign, he said, adding: "You'll see the unions and both national committees focusing there." "For a more comfortable margin of victory in '04, we would like to win these states."

EDITOR'S NOTE — Will Lester covers politics and polling for The Associated Press.

ARIN @ 2002 THE STATE



Sebelius using campaign 101 approach

By late July, Democrat Kathleen Sebelius had raised about \$1.8 million for her campaign for governor.

During the past month, she's been spending a good chunk of it on four television ads touting her record as insurance commissioner — but not mentioning her party affiliation.

She's following a traditional campaign strategy of attempting to solidify a positive image with voters before GOP nominee Tim Shallenburger and fellow Republicans begin raising questions about her record and politics.

She's also attempting to rise above partisan labels, something she must do to woo moderate Republican voters and win the Nov. 5 general election in a state where Republicans far outnumber Democrats.

"She is clearly trying to establish an identity in the minds of prospective voters in a positive sense, associated with experience and success," said James Sheffield, chairman of Wichita State University's Political Science Department. "This is classic Political Campaign 101."

Sebelius began airing her ads statewide the week before the Aug. 6 primary. All four portray her as a successful administrator who cleaned up the Insurance Department and made it more efficient while protecting consumers.

One, called "Gloves," depicts Sebelius entering the commissioner's office in January 1995 with supporters to clean it up. She snaps on a pair of rubber gloves and says, "Let's get to work."

"It's really important that people are reminded of her record as insurance commissioner," said Sebelius spokeswoman Nicole Corcoran-Basso. "It's important to get this information out there."

The toughest of the four ads may be "Hope," which chastises Republicans, saying they had a negative primary campaign and citing newspaper articles about GOP candidates' squabbles over



john hanna

• ap news analysis

advertising.

A narrator says, "It was disappointing, so let's hope it ends here."

Shallenburger, the state treasurer, won 41 percent of the vote in a tough Republican primary against Senate President Dave Kerr, of Hutchinson, and Wichita mayor Bob Knight.

Shallenburger spokesman Bob Murray acknowledged last week that the GOP nominee's fund raising for the general election campaign would have to "start from scratch."

But being the GOP nominee reduces or eliminates Sebelius' head start in raising money, if conservative Shallenburger can keep enough moderate Republicans behind him.

Last week, in Cowley County, two Winfield Democrats, Sen. Greta Goodwin and Teresa Krusor, the state Democratic Party's secretary, announced the start of a nonpartisan group to cater to crossover voters.

But such efforts often need public support from a Republican to make a significant difference.

In addition, the primary contest made Shallenburger far more visible in recent months than Sebelius.

"She will not go unchallenged," Murray said. "In a Republican state, Democrats tend to run as close to Republican ideas as they can get."

Republicans clearly hope to paint Sebelius as a liberal. During one primary campaign news conference, Kerr briefly compared Sebelius to New York Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton.

In a fund raising letter dated the day after the primary, Shallenburger's campaign said Sebelius is a liberal who "needs to sound like a Republican" to win.

"Well, she is a wolf in sheep's clothing, because if she wins, she will raise your taxes and burden your life with unnecessary government, just like Democrats do once elected," the letter said.

Sebelius has, of course, touted her record in decreasing the Insurance Department's budget and, when asked whether she would increase taxes, promised to initiate a top-to-bottom review of government to find savings. She also has said the state needs to be business friendly.

Her television ads are designed to inoculate her against attacks like the one in Shallenburger's fund-raising letter.

"If you've got a candidate who's got a fairly positive record in an abstract sense, then what you're doing is building a platform that's hard to tear down," Sheffield said.

And Joe Aistrup, chairman of Kansas State University's Political Science Department, said Sebelius has picked a good time to run her commercials, when Shallenburger is raising money to get on the air again.

"She can run the ads and build up her name recognition pretty much without a response," he said.

Murray doubted the effectiveness of early advertising, saying most voters aren't paying attention. Sheffield acknowledged voters often have short memories and "more than a month ago is a previous century."

Ultimately, Sebelius won't know how effective her strategy is Election Day. But she's taken it straight out of the textbook for candidates.

"It's a classic campaign strategy," Aistrup said.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Correspondent John Hanna has covered Kansas government and politics for The Associated Press since 1987.

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Facing something big and brown



steve haynes

• along the sappa

Walking downriver at dusk, dodging willows and rocks, I looked up and saw something big and brown in the bushes ahead.

Since Colorado is lousy with bears these days, I paused. The mountains are hot and dry, and the grubs and berries that bears exist on are hard to find.

I didn't really want to be face-to-face with a hungry, grouchy bear, so I spoke up.

"Hello."

And the moose raised her head, a young female. We stared at each other, eyeball to eyeball, and then she moved off into the willows. I had to hustle downstream to find my wallet, which I had left on the bank earlier, and Cynthia, who was reading at the foot of the meadow.

We were up in the Weminuche Wilderness, above a Forest Service campground, where I had wanted to try the fishing.

It wasn't great — there was a path alongside the stream, never a good sign — but any time spent fishing is good time. And there were enough fish to keep me entertained.

I wasn't keeping any of the trout anyway. I had enough for supper back home, and we were set to return to Kansas the next day. I just wanted to enjoy the evening.

And that's not hard to do when you have a mountain valley, a fishing pole and a beautiful day. Besides,

how often do you get to look a moose in the eye?

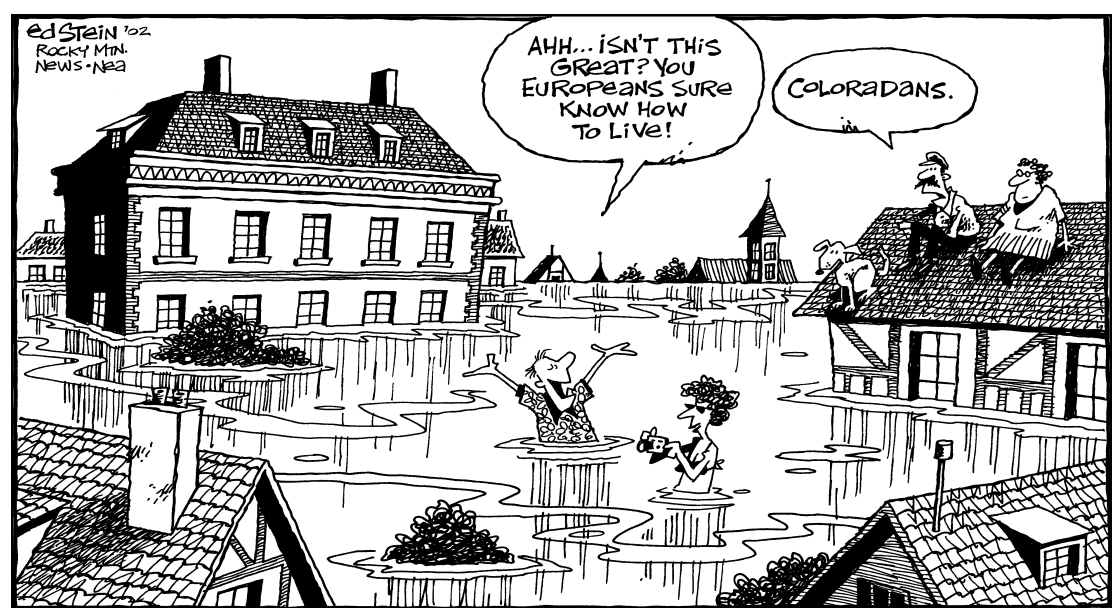
Moose are a recent phenomenon in southern Colorado. Unlike deer, elk and buffalo, they never lived in the state. It's too far south to have been part of their historic range.

The state Division of Wildlife stocked a few in North Park, near Wyoming, more than 20 years ago. They did so well there — despite losses to hunters who can't tell them from elk — that Fish and Game decided to plant a herd in southern Colorado about 10 years ago.

They have grown and multiplied, to the point where there are nearly 1,000 in the state today. They still suffer at the hands of elk hunters, but that apparently hasn't kept the herd from expanding.

Colorado even has a moose hunting season, though only a couple of dozen licenses are issued, and those mostly to in-state hunters. Forty to 50 times as many hunters apply as get licenses.

Now we are seeing moose with some frequency. The moose in the bushes was my third sighting of



the summer, though it was the first one I'd had such a close relationship with.

Better a moose on the trail than a bear.

Since animal lovers succeeded in getting the spring bear season banned a few years back, Colorado has a bear problem.

The soft of heart said spring hunting left cubs orphaned. That sentiment prevailed in a ballot referendum, despite warnings from biologists that the bear population would explode.

And guess what's happened the last couple of years, with dry weather and poor production of the stuff bears eat? They've come to town in alarming numbers, looking for food, whether it's garbage, groceries or poodles.

We saw one out on the highway by a lodge; the owners said it had been around all summer. Another was spotted right in town, and one went through our back yard a week or two before we got there.

I'm more careful on the trail all the time.

berry's world

