

commentary

from other pens...

Mondale, Lautenberg seeking a second act

In the U.S. Senate's two centuries as a legislative body only a few former members have won the privilege of a second act.

In Tuesday's elections, Walter Mondale in Minnesota and Frank Lautenberg in New Jersey seek places on that comeback list, each after moving into a suddenly empty spot on the ballot.

If Mondale, 74, is elected to fill the vacancy left by the death of fellow Democrat Paul Wellstone it will have been 26 years since he last represented Minnesota in the Senate.

Senate Historical Office records show that would be the longest gap in service, rivaled only by the 25 years that separated Andrew Jackson's two Senate terms early in American history.

Senate historian Richard A. Baker says he can find no precedent for the circumstances under which Democrat Lautenberg returned to electoral politics at age 78. The former three-term senator had been retired for two years when Sen. Robert Torricelli's bid for re-election faded under an ethical cloud.

"That seems to be unique," Baker said, explaining there is no other case in which a former senator replaced a still-serving senator on the ballot.

Overall, Mondale would be the 31st former senator to return to the chamber after an absence of 10 years or more. He would be just the seventh to do so in the last 100 years.

Lautenberg, out of office a far shorter time, would find his place among members who have served nonconsecutive terms since 1913, the year in which senators were first elected directly by the people rather than by state legislatures. If successful, Lautenberg would be No. 33.

Mondale left the Senate in 1976 to serve as Jimmy Carter's vice president. His return would make him just the fifth former senator to be elected to the chamber after serving as vice president.

Hubert H. Humphrey, Mondale's fellow Minnesotan and mentor, was returned to the Senate in 1970 after serving as vice president under Lyndon B. Johnson and failing to win the presidency on his own.

A 1977 change in Senate rules made to honor Humphrey also would benefit Mondale. Under a standing order of the Senate, Mondale, as a former vice president, would assume the honorary post of deputy president pro tem. That would give him additional office space, a car, driver and a salary equal to the \$172,200 received by the Senate's top leaders. As of January, other senators will be paid \$155,000 a year.

Both Mondale and Lautenberg had been casting longing glances at their former Senate seats even before fate gave them a chance to reclaim them.

"Almost as soon as I announced my retirement I had pangs of regret," Lautenberg said. Later, he added he hadn't been out of the Senate for long before "I realized how much I missed it."

"I really love this place," Mondale said in early September as he delivered a lecture before senators, family and friends gathered in the Old Senate Chamber. "My Senate years were the happiest of my public career; I found my sweet spot here."

Some senators, returned by the voters to political life after a gap in service, made their second acts their principal performance.

The late Sen. Barry Goldwater, R-Ariz., returned to the Senate after resigning to run for president in 1964. Goldwater said without hesitation that his last years in the chamber were by far his most productive.

Both Lautenberg and Mondale would clearly welcome a second act and the opportunities it would bring. It would give the former vice president a chance to be remembered for something other than his crushing defeat by Ronald Reagan in the 1984 presidential election.

Mondale's return would have one unique aspect. The vice president serves as president of the Senate, and by custom a marble bust of each of them is placed near the Senate chamber. Mondale's bust was installed after its completion in 1987.

If elected, the Minnesotan would be the only sitting senator who could pose for photographs next to his own official statue.

EDITOR'S NOTE — Lawrence L. Knutson has reported on Congress, the White House and Washington's history for 35 years.

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Dole endorses Shallenburger for governor

It was a ringing endorsement, the kind that Tim Shallenburger hasn't been used to.

Bob Dole, retired senator, Republican leader, erstwhile presidential candidate, had flown back from his Washington home to ride the party's Victory Tour.

He said what Gov. Bill Graves, his second-in-command and dozens of other liberal Kansas Republicans had been unwilling to.

"I'm here," Sen. Dole said, "because I believe in what Tim Shallenburger believes in: less taxes, less government, less regulation."

"We've got a Republican president, a Republican cabinet, and we're going to have a Republican Congress. You want a Republican governor to be dealing with those people."

So there was Bob Dole, the hero of the Big First congressional district sprawling across Kansas, and there was Tim Shallenburger, trailing the Democrat candidate by 6 to 22 points, depending on whose polls you believe.

There's no doubt that, all other things being equal, Tim Shallenburger should be ahead of his opponent, Democrat Kathleen Sebelius, the state insurance commissioner.

But all things are not equal in Kansas this year. Mr. Shallenburger may have won the primary, but the old Republican "in" group — led by Bill Graves and his



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pack of left-wing Republicans — they cannot stand Tim Shallenburger.

He fought them when he was speaker of the House, and they've never forgiven him, or the wing of the party that he represents.

In most states, Republicans fight the Democrats for power. In Kansas, there are so few Democrats, and the Republicans are so powerful, that to have a good scrap, they have to fight each other.

So the party has fallen into division and despair. The liberal Republicans (they usually prefer the term moderate, but it's a poor fit) have lost a lot of these fights. They are out of tune with what people in Kansas want — the same things Bob Dole wants. In the absence of a Democratic alternative, they have become the voice of Big Government.

They are tired of losing budget fights and tax-cut fights, and they have developed an intense dislike for

Tim Shallenburger. They'd rather see a Democrat in the governor's office than a Republican who doesn't kowtow to their faction.

And seems likely they'll get their wish, unless Kansas voters wake up.

For while the Republicans have been fighting and backstabbing, Ms. Sebelius has been raising money and building an organization. Daughter of a governor, daughter-in-law of a beloved Kansas congressman, topnotch candidate in her own right, she knows how to take advantage.

The "moderate" Republicans?

Most of them are sitting on their hands, hoping to teach Mr. Shallenburger and his ilk a lesson. Gov. Graves did finally offer up a lukewarm endorsement, but it was too little and way too late. The rest of them just took their ball and went home.

Leave it to Bob Dole to do the right thing.

Will the party survive eight years of Kathleen Sebelius in the Statehouse?

Well, it survived eight years of Bill Graves. Sort of.

Maybe a party that's so deeply divided does not deserve to win an election. But that's hardly fair to a candidate who has some serious and sincere ideas about how to run the state.

Too bad.

Candidates, parties work to get their voters out

TOPEKA — For several weeks, volunteers of varying political philosophies have been calling Kansans about voting.

The telephone calls should continue even after the polls open Tuesday. Partisans also expect to walk neighborhoods and knock on doors; they'll bring advance voting ballots to homes and take them away to county election officials. They'll drive people to polling places if necessary.

The candidates and their parties may spend hundreds of thousands of dollars to mold opinion through television advertising, but they often need shoe leather and personal contact to motivate citizens to vote.

With the governor's office at stake, four other statewide positions on the ballot, a U.S. senator and four congressmen up for re-election, 125 Kansas House seats to be filled, and three Board of Education races to be decided this year, the candidates and parties have been working hard to get out their voters.

"This is the sort of stuff that is cutting edge now," said Kari Austin, the state Republican Party's executive director. "We used to do it really well, and we got away from it."

Secretary of State Ron Thornburgh is predicting an average voter turnout, about 820,000 Kansans, or 51 percent of the 1.6 million registered. But officials in both parties expect thousands of volunteers to participate in get-out-the-vote efforts.

Efforts intensified after Oct. 16, the first day election officials were allowed to mail advance ballots to potential voters. Those ballots are valid so long as they're returned before polls close.

Some county election officials have said they've seen an increase in the number of people requesting advance ballots. In 2000, about 182,000 were cast, or 16.7 percent of the total, according to the secretary of state's office.

"We're mailing out a lot more advance ballots than in the past," said Douglas County Clerk Patty Jaines. "To me, that means the political parties are working hard to get the vote out."

Austin said the state GOP is putting an intense effort into the 3rd Congressional District.

First, Republicans hope their candidate, Adam Taff, can unseat Democratic incumbent Dennis



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• ap news analysis

Moore. Secondly, Austin said, advance voting is relatively popular in Johnson County, where the population is far more mobile than some rural areas.

The state GOP used automated phone messages featuring President Bush to contact 85,000 Republicans in the 3rd District who received advance ballot applications.

The party mailed out 20,000 cards and planned to have volunteers walk neighborhoods to remind people to vote.

"We're trying to concentrate on things that don't cost a lot of money — shoe leather, sweat equity," she said.

But Austin said the rest of the state won't be ignored.

GOP Tim Shallenburger's gubernatorial campaign has had up to 50 volunteers a day calling potential voters.

"We can turn our base out," Shallenburger said. "We're good at that. We make sure they vote."

Austin said such efforts are important because the GOP enjoys a significant advantage in registration. Nearly 743,000 voters are Republican, compared to 441,000 Democrats and 420,000 unaffiliated.

"Sometimes, it can be easy to take that advantage for granted," Austin said.

Democrats are scrapping for votes as well. State Chairman Tom Sawyer said Democrats may deliver 100,000 advance ballot voting applications statewide. Advance balloting is important, Sawyer said, because many people work 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and have little enough time to vote.

"This year's effort is bigger than we've done in a long time," Sawyer said.

Making sure ballots are returned can take time, energy and an attention to detail.

For example, Rep. Rocky Nichols, D-Topeka, said volunteers make sure people get their ballots,

then encourage them to fill them out. In some cases, they're collected and delivered by volunteers to election officials.

Sawyer said Democrats must have intense get-out-the-vote efforts because their registration disadvantage.

"The bigger the turnout, the better," he said. "We want to make sure our Democrats get out and vote."

On Election Day, volunteers in both parties plan their traditional poll watching.

In some cases, volunteers will try to contact voters who normally vote in the morning but haven't been seen at the polling place by noon on Election Day. But Austin said such efforts require so much work that they can't be done on a large scale.

Sawyer said an influx of anti-abortion and other activists on social issues into the Republican Party in the late 1980s and 1990s showed the importance of personal contact.

Austin noted that Republicans now train precinct committee people on get-out-the-vote efforts with a video that features footage of Ronald Reagan from the 1960s.

Austin said that when television began to have a big effect on campaigns, activists saw it as the way to reach people. Now, she said, they understand that followup is required — voter by voter.

"It won't double turnout," she said. "But it may make the difference in who wins an election."

Political Writer John Hanna has covered state government and politics for the Associated Press since 1987.

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'I'VE GOT IT! LET'S DO A REMAKE OF THAT GREAT OLD MOVIE 'LAWRENCE OF ARABIA' AND CALL IT 'LARRY OF ARABIA.'

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