



The Energy Candidate's Dilemma

Posted by [JoulesBurn](#) on August 22, 2009 - 10:59am

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One of the ways to effect change on a local (and national) level is to cast your ballot. Another is to actually run for elected office. It takes a strange breed to want to do that, as the level of scrutiny for your every word or deed is more than most people would wish for. Also, the political realities of what can be accomplished cause many of those elected to leave office in frustration. Most of those who stay, however, arrive at their own level of compromise between their goals and ideals (if they indeed had any) and the actions or words needed to get re-elected. For a challenger, it is actually better to have no clear positions whatsoever on most issues, relying on a crafted soundbite on one issue or something even less meaningful for voter persuasion. But what if your foremost concern centered around an imminent oil supply crunch? Could you craft a message around that and still get elected?



There was a local election last week in Seattle and surrounding King County, and one of the contested positions was King County Executive. This person heads the executive branch of government for the county of about 2 million people. Although cities such as Seattle have their own governing bodies, King County provides many shared services including the court system, public transit, and sewage. Revenue comes from a portions of sales and property tax, and both of these are on a downswing. This isn't a great time to run, especially if you have an expensive agenda. But the job seems to be a good political stepping stone, as the previous office holder, Ron Sims, is now Undersecretary of Housing and Urban Development for Obama. The holder before Sims was Gary Locke, who subsequently served 8 years as governor and now is US Secretary of Commerce.

The election was a primary, with the top two contenders for each race advancing to the finals. The K.C. Executive position is non-partisan, so it is often the case that a strange mix of long-shots enters the race. The furthest out there was a guy who ran under the name [Goodspaceguy](#), touting his minor in economics.

Question 2: What do you see as the main issues facing Seattle's parks and green spaces, and what is one innovative idea or change you think would help address these issues?

Answer: Lack of use. I, Goodspaceguy, want more free parking and showers. Sweaty people stink. I, Goodspaceguy, believe that showers would help solve this problem by enabling park users to exercise and then shower themselves promptly clean. Also I would like to establish campgrounds in some of the parks.

Unfortunately, most of the county parks are due to be [mothballed](#) because of the budget crisis, and they already have free parking as far as I know.

Another [candidate](#) was physicist and former lawyer Stan Lippmann. He describes himself as a libertarian, but his concerns about the economy seem to be [most on his mind](#):

Lippmann says he sees a pretty bleak future for our country's economy and its effect on King County. He predicts more banks will go under this fall. If he makes it to the primary and is elected Lippmann says everyone in the County will be advised to exchange all of their paper money for silver coins.

"My thinking is if we all have real money in our pockets, then we can go shopping. We can go to the supermarket and buy gasoline."

Lippmann would also make it a priority to buy a mine, so the county could produce its own metals. He also wants to convert all of our cars to natural gas.

"Everyone who drives will save 2000 dollars a year."



Got mine?

As a candidate for Seattle City Council in 2007, Lippmann gave energy an even more prominent position on his slate. He advocated a large civic [investment in wind farms](#), buying a mothballed [nuclear reactor](#), and purchasing a coal-fired generator and converting it to a [coal-to-liquids plant](#).

One can instinctively tell that he never stood a chance of being elected, and many of his thoughts on fluoridation, vaccines, and free energy were better left unexposed. But his concerns on the economy and energy are familiar ones to readers of The Oil Drum, and a few of his proposals and predictions have some connection to reality.

The point of this post is not to debate the merits or demerits of either candidate. Instead, here is a challenge: come up with your own campaign platform or candidate's statement for this position (or some other one), incorporating your ideas for effecting change in light of current economic and future energy problems. Realizing that a campaign blurb is not the best place to deliver bad news or wade through complex subjects, what message will get serious (as opposed to mocking) attention from the voters and the press?

As for the outcome of yesterday's race, the two survivors include a current King County Council member and a former television news anchorwoman with few stated positions on anything.

Guess who received the most votes.



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