

Off And Running

Baltimore Jewish Times

September 25, 2009



Jon Weinstein hopes moderation and an early campaign will send him to Annapolis to represent his slice of Howard County.

By Barbara Pash, Associate Editor

The demographics are changing and, for Jon Weinstein, that's a good thing.

He's taking the plunge into politics with a run for state delegate in next year's election. But his legislative district is 9A, the northern half of Howard County, which up to now has been a GOP stronghold. The district's two state delegates, as well as its state senator, are all Republicans. Mr. Weinstein is a Democrat.

In a district with roughly 52,000 registered voters, Democrats now out-number Republicans by about 750 voters, according to the latest state Board of Elections figures.

"It's a slight advantage," said Mr. Weinstein. "Every time the [voter] rolls come out, there is an increase on the Democratic side."

Mr. Weinstein is co-owner of a management consulting firm in Ellicott City called Line of Sight. He started the company four years ago after a career in management consulting for federal, state and local government agencies.

"I got tired of working for other people," said Mr. Weinstein, 41, an Ellicott City resident married to his high school sweetheart, Margaret. They have two sons and belong to Temple Isaiah in Fulton. They are also members of the Knesseth Club, a group of community leaders in Howard County that promotes Jewish values and causes.

While parts of Howard County do not have many Jews, that's not so in District 9A. Mr. Weinstein doesn't have exact numbers, but the district has an active Jewish population and he does not expect his religion to be an issue.

In the 2002 redistricting process, 9A was redrawn to include more than half of Howard County. Running from the Baltimore County line to the Carroll County line, it includes Ellicott City, Woodbine and parts of Clarksville and Sykesville.

The rest of Howard County is represented by Democrats so the 2010 election will tell if the voter shift in District 9A has any significance.

“My district is moderate on the whole,” Mr. Weinstein said. “It’s not as liberal as Columbia. In the past, the district has leaned more conservative, but that has changed.”

Mr. Weinstein’s last political office was at Dickinson College where, ironically, he was vice chair of the student Republican group. Long since a Democrat, he said his life so far has focused on family and work, although he was active with some local campaigns such as that of fellow Democrat and Howard County Executive Ken Ulman.



Jon at his campaign BBQ in April with County Executive Ken Ulman and Delegate Guy Guzzone.

In fact, it was Mr. Ulman and the Howard County delegation to the General Assembly that encouraged Mr. Weinstein to enter the political fray. Mr. Ulman called Mr. Weinstein “a great voice” to represent the district because “he has a common sense understanding of how to make government work better and that’s what we need in Annapolis.”

For his part, Mr. Weinstein said, “My philosophy is to look at issues based on their own merits, not through the filter of party doctrine.”

His particular challenge: he is facing two incumbents and he is not well-known. So before campaigning, he spoke with people who’ve fought the battle before him. Following their advice, he has put together material on his viewpoints at the Web site voteweinstein.com, held “meet Jon” events and is starting to knock on doors.

In aiming for moderate voters, whether Democrats or Republicans, he talks about using his expertise to make government more effective, helping people in need and finding ways to do that efficiently.

He also is pursuing issues “near and dear to me” such as stricter sentencing for child predators and people convicted of vehicular manslaughter.

Unfortunately, he said he has experience with both. A few years ago, he had a neighbor whose nephew, a student at Towson University, was killed by a carjacker, and he knows people who were victims of child sexual abuse.

Mr. Ulman added: “There is a real opportunity for a moderate candidate to be elected in that district.”

Field Of One

As the only officially declared candidate so far in District 9A, Jon Weinstein is campaigning so early that some people ask him if the election is this November.

There is some local media buzz, too. “I think I’m getting some press because Democrats have a strong candidate they can hang their hats on,” he said.

Unlike areas in metropolitan Baltimore, District 9A has only two state delegates. The two top vote getters in each of the Democratic and Republican primaries run in the general election for the two seats in Annapolis.

The current incumbents -- both Republicans -- are Warren E. Miller and Gail H. Bates. Observers say a wide Democratic field is unlikely, which at this point means that Mr. Weinstein is eyeing a party primary win and then contesting in the Nov. 2, 2010, general election.