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Michigan Politics

Hoekstra running for Governor By George Weeks



Nine-term U.S. Representative Pete Hoekstra of Holland, a former businessman and long top Republican on the House Intelligence Committee, this week joins the expanding list of those in serious early pursuit of nominations for the 2010 gubernatorial campaign.

His Monday announcement tour was confined to Metro Detroit, Lansing, and other

downstate venues.

But he told me Friday, "We think northern Michigan is absolutely critical. We'll get to the Upper Peninsula. We'll get to Traverse City."

His strategy was calculated to hit downstate population centers before attention there is focused on Detroit's hosting of the NCAA basketball Final Four.

In his announcement, Hoekstra said: "Our revitalized Michigan begins with us thinking differently and acting differently. We need to begin the process of rebuilding a strong Michigan: creating good jobs, promoting strong businesses, and driving meaningful and measurable results. We will rebuild and reinvigorate this state, creating an environment for investment and job creation. We will deliver results with a transparent, effective, and accountable government."

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Among other active GOP potentials for the seat to be vacated by term-limited Democratic Governor Jennifer Granholm are Attorney General Mike Cox, Secretary of State Terri Lynn Land, and Ann Arbor businessman Rick Snyder.

While others are mentioned, the clear early frontrunner for the Democratic nomination remains Lieutenant Governor John Cherry, who in recent weeks has been announcing those joining his "Whole Lot of People Supporting John Cherry" organization.

On Friday, his campaign announced endorsements of 17 county commissioners from "across Michigan." All were from deep downstate, except Darrel Bengry of Delta County. Earlier this month, Cherry announced endorsements from 14 Democratic county chairs, including Diana Ketola from Grand Traverse.

Public Lands Dispute

Michigan's delegation was sharply divided on congressional approval of the Omnibus Public Land Management Act.

Senators Carl Levin and Debbie Stabenow hailed the inclusion of numerous provisions that would help preserve and protect natural resources and improve parks and trails in Michigan.

They said the bill "would benefit" Keweenaw National Historical Park and Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore, both in the Upper Peninsula; the River Raisin battlefield in Monroe and Wayne counties; and the North Country National Scenic Trail, which traverses more than a thousand miles in Michigan.

Said Levin: "This bill is critically important to preserving natural resources in Michigan and making our rich history and environment accessible for current and future generations."

Not so fast, said Representative Bart Stupak (D-Menominee), who, along with the other northern congressmen, Republicans Hoekstra and Dave Camp of Midland, voted against the bill. Stupak said the proposed wilderness designation in Pictured Rocks "lacks the support of the local city and county governments."

Among their objections, Hoekstra

and Camp contended the bill would curtail energy exploration in some areas of the country.

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A special thanks to all the local bikers and their friends who turned out to see the show.
We'll see you next year!
Thank you so very much for all your hard work and dedication. We look forward to repeating this great event Sunday, May 30, 2010.

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Hoekstra called it a "massive Washington land grab that will prevent American energy exploration in some areas of the country and restricts access to land, including 11,740 acres in Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore."

He said, "The top-down Washington approach to land management prevents enormous opportunities to explore for energy in America and significantly limits opportunities for public recreation. The environment can and should be protected in certain areas, but the public should have a say in where that happens."

The districts of Stupak, Camp, and Hoekstra include all the National Park Service sites in Michigan. (Of the counties of Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore, Camp represents Leelanau; Hoekstra represents Benzie.)

The northern three are not objecting to provision of the bill that would give national park designation to the Battle of the River Raisin along Michigan's southern border. But they have valid objections to the ramrod "omnibus" process that ignores hearing such local concerns as those raised by Stupak at Pictured Rocks.

Sunshine Flickers On

During the recently concluded Sunshine Week, a national effort promoting open government and freedom of information, there was the customary trumpeting on importance of keeping the bright light of public scrutiny on acts of public officials.

This year on some fronts, there seems to be progress. Worthy of note:

- The House last week passed a bill that would, among other things, require certain state officials and candidates for elected office to disclose their personal finances to the Bureau of Elections.

Freshman Rep. Dan Scripps (DLeland), a member of the House Ethics and Elections Committee who has made transparency in government one of his causes, said this was among measures that "will give our residents the tools they need to hold us accountable for our actions."

- Secretary of State Terri Lynn Land, long an advocate of openness in government, reaffirmed her commitment to transparency by posting online what she called "the most detailed expenditure report available from any state department."

It includes salary information broken out by job classification and number of people in each classification.

She noted that all such information is typically available to taxpayers only through Freedom of Information Act requests or by wading through complex budget documentation and legislative fiscal agency reports.

Land credited the Mackinac Center for Public Policy in Midland for encouraging state government leaders to go beyond the basic requirements of right-to-know laws through its Show Michigan the Money initiative.

The center is a conservative think tank often at odds with environmental and other interest groups. But it deserves the credit that Land gives it on this issue.

George Weeks retired in 2006 after 22 years as political columnist for The Detroit News. His weekly Michigan Politics column is syndicated by Superior Features.