

Capital Journal



ESTABLISHED IN 1888

Mrs. Bernard Mainwaring, President

William L. Mainwaring, Editor & Publisher

James G. Welch, Managing Editor

# Atiyeh over Clay Myers

When State Sen. Victor Atiyeh decided to seek the Republican nomination for governor this year, he surprised his own party and the state's political pundits.

Secretary of State Clay Myers has been running for the governor's office almost from the day he was appointed by Gov. Tom McCall to succeed McCall as secretary of state. Myers has been elected to the job twice and is serving his eighth year.

And it has been widely assumed that Myers would gain the Republican nomination without serious difficulty. For that reason, Myers was miles ahead of Atiyeh in terms of committed party support long before the 50-year-old Portland rug merchant decided to make it a race.

Atiyeh's decision to run, despite the long odds, reflected the growing dismay among many Oregon Republican leaders over the prospect of a Myers administration in the Statehouse.

Atiyeh and Myers aren't the only Republicans in the gubernatorial primary. But they're the only ones who will draw many votes. The others are John Smets, a Lake Oswego businessman; Frank Heisler, a retired logger from Gales Creek; and William Jolley, a Willamina refrigeration contractor. None is qualified.

Myers and Atiyeh offer voters a clear choice for two reasons: They are different men in style and approach, and they are different in political philosophy.

Myers is politically moderate to liberal. He believes that the answers to problems in public education, health care, transportation and other social needs can be found in effective government action. In philosophy, he is in the Hatfield-McCall wing of Oregon Republican politics.

Atiyeh is conservative. He sees government as the problem-solver of last resort.

He'd much prefer to encourage the private sector to solve problems. When that fails, he's willing to support government action but only on a slow, methodical and very cautious basis. Atiyeh's 16 years as a state legislator have convinced him that reliance on government to solve all of society's ills is an illusion, and a costly one.

Although Atiyeh is conservative politically, he has been an active supporter of legislation for civil rights and environmental protection. And as a legislative leader, he is an independent thinker and a man of unquestioned integrity.

Myers also is considered a man of integrity. But we know no one who rates him high as a decision-maker. He does, in fact, have considerable difficulty reaching a conclusion. He often gets so hung up on details that he has trouble making up his mind. Then, when he does make it up, he's inclined to be defensive and inflexible.

Of the many people we talked with who have worked closely with Myers in the past few years on legislation, elections, redistricting, etc., we found none enthusiastic about a Myers governorship. Their observations pretty well matched our own through the years.

A Myers governorship would create great clouds of steam and smoke over the Statehouse, but we doubt it would prove very effective. Myers would fashion some kind of consensus government with extensive use of advisory groups rather than exercising the kind of personal leadership the Oregon governor's office requires. We also have doubts about appointments Myers might make. The appointing power is one of the governor's most effective tools in running state government. McCall has chosen wisely in most cases and given the state outstanding appointees in key jobs. We have considerably less confidence in Myers' ability to seek out the best qualified men and women and to give them the kind of support they would need to administer the executive departments of state government. He simply hasn't demonstrated that kind of skill in his years as secretary of state.

An Atiyeh administration would lack the outward appearance of fuss and bustle that Myers likely would generate. But Atiyeh could, we believe, deal effectively with the legislature and the executive departments. He wouldn't be an innovator, and we'd prefer one, but neither would he set off in all directions at once.

He is far more knowledgeable than Myers on most of the more complex issues of state government.

Republicans would serve their state best by nominating State Sen. Victor Atiyeh for governor May 28.



'Maybe now you'll learn a new dance!'