

# Analyses of State Superintendent and other races

Borrowing from the soon-to-appear-in-Cheyenne Roy Clark song, "Thank God and Greyhound, he's gone."

In the greatest of ironies in the recent primary election, the wife of the man most responsible for Jim McBride becoming State Superintendent of Public Instruction took him out. McBride, that is, not her husband.

Thank you, Cindy Hill. All is (almost) forgiven for your husband's 2005 mistake.

For those who may have doubted my criticism of McBride over the past four years, the election results should have removed that doubt. Voters despised him.

Jim McBride should have never been considered to be hired by the Department of Education and he certainly should never have been hired. Jim McBride should never have been considered to be on the short list sent the governor from which he had to pick an interim State Superintendent and he certainly should never have been chosen. And, Jim McBride should never have been considered for election to the office for a four year term and certainly should have never won that election.

I honestly and sincerely believe that the election of Jim McBride to be Wyoming Superintendent of Public Instruction in 2006 will go down in our history as one of, if not the, greatest election blunder in our 116 years of statehood. It wasn't a walkover. McBride had an opponent in that election so voters have to shoulder the blame and humiliation for that disastrous outcome. His opponent's drawback was that she was a Democrat. She was a lifelong Wyoming public school educator and a sitting school district superintendent at the most challenging district in Wyoming at the time of the election.

Soon, Jim McBride will be gone. Where will he settle? If he has family in Cheyenne, it will probably be here. Otherwise he has no roots here and will move elsewhere. One place it won't be is Bennett, Colorado. He left there in disgrace and he'd have a hard time finding anyone who would welcome him back.

In summary, thank you Cindy Hill. You not only eliminated McBride in the primary, you decimated him. By garnering nearly half of the votes cast - against three men with at least some education credentials, you will be a formidable foe in the general election. You should be aware that Dave Freudenthal has not forgiven your husband's efforts to discredit and embarrass him in 2006 and is expected to use his political popularity to bolster the campaign of your general election opponent, Democrat Mike Massie. That's the Dave Freudenthal voters have come to know and love. He is the Democrats answer to Al Simpson. His campaign philosophy is short and simple: Anything goes in pursuit of victory. He (Dave) will usually not risk a gram of political capital on a loser so he must believe Massie has at least a chance to defeat you. But, just like the Dave (Featherly) who is writing this, he never forgets and seldom forgives. The word on the street is that Dave

Freudenthal has not forgotten the accusations implied against him, his wife and his brother in the 2006 campaign and will come out with both guns blazing.

So, batten down the hatches, Cindy Hill. Batten down the hatches.

While most of the attention in the recent Republican primary was on the races for governor and state superintendent of public instruction, another race turned out to be as interesting - from the standpoint of closeness in the final results. That was the contest for state auditor.

Bruce Brown ran in the 2006 primary against Rita Meyer and hung around the Republican Party for the last four years. When Rita announced her plan to run for governor, Brown thought the auditor seat was his for the taking. Enter Cynthia Cloud. Her victory may have been as much about the mild dislike for Bruce Brown as it was about a love for Cynthia.

Between the two, they received a little more than 93,000 votes - 13,500 didn't vote for either of them. Ms. Cloud won 13 of Wyoming's 23 counties and Brown ten. Cynthia's margin of victory was 1,579 and seemed very close, even though it was more than twice the margin of victory Matt Mead bought over Rita Meyer.

Interestingly, had Rita Meyer prevailed in the governor's race, the Equality State would likely have elected three women to the top five executive offices. Imagine that. The Equality State practicing equality. What a concept!

The old men who sit as state treasurer and secretary of state will slide back into their fourth terms. In this election, almost 15,500 Republican voters did not vote for Max Maxfield and close to 16,500 did not vote for Joe Meyer. After the next four years, they'll be term limited again and have to seek another of the five state offices. It won't be governor because neither has the confidence to believe voters would elevate them there - the Peter Principle, you know. Maybe, because neither the auditor nor state superintendent seats will be term limited in 2014, these guys might retire. Nah!

In the state legislature, I couldn't find one example of an incumbent who sought re-election being defeated. Several chose not to run again but none who did lost. In fact, there were only two reasonably close races in the 75+ seats in the Senate and House that were up for election.

In the state senate, at least four new members will join the body. One will be local - Fred Emerich and Lori Millin are running for the seat Bob Fecht was elected to in 2006 and Rick Hunnicutt was appointed to complete the term when Fecht was forced to resign after the 2008 election by a new Cheyenne mayor.

In the state house, there will be a dozen new members. A twenty percent turnover in one election is huge. Locally, Pete Anderson is giving up his seat and Lori Millin is running for the state senate instead of a house seat.

In Senate District 1, in east central Wyoming, three Republican challengers vied for the seat left vacant by Charles Thompson (who?). The results were shockingly close. The three finished within 68 votes of each other - 1,844, 1,791, 1,776. Now that was a close election. There were no other close races in the senate.

In the House, all seats are up and there were a couple fairly close outcomes. In HD 6, the incumbent barely survived. The Converse County seat was held by incumbent Richard Cannady by only 12 votes. Locally, Lynn Hutchings proved an attractive candidate and lost to a nomad incumbent by 191 votes. In a bit of a surprise, Cale Case was somewhat threatened in his race for an umpteenth term.

My good friend, retired Navy Captain and former U.S. House candidate Bill Winney ran in the Republican primary in HD 22 and won handily with 70% of the vote.

Unfortunately, Horse Slaughter Queen Sue Wallis withstood a primary challenge and defeated her opponent by 177 votes, which is close against an incumbent. It doesn't look like animal rights' activists provided any funding to Wallis' opponent to take her out. Too bad.

Probably the most interesting local races in November will be in HD 12, where Republican incumbent Amy Edmonds will try to hold her seat in a Democratic district against former city councilman Robert Aylward and in HD 41 where Democrat Ken Esquibel will try to hold his seat against current LCCC board trustee John Kaiser. Amy has had serious challengers in both of the elections she has won.

The general election may send a guy named "Bunky" to Cheyenne and another fellow named Clarence Thomas. Who says there is no reason to pay attention?

In local county and city contests, candidates were not too numerous. In fact, one city ward did not eliminate anyone as only two candidates filed to seek the single seat available. Incumbent Georgia Broyles and Frank Gerstenkorn advanced on walkovers. In Ward 1, Sean Allen and newcomer Amy Threewitt will face off and in Ward 2, it will be incumbent Mark Rinne and Jeff Goins. Interestingly, two of the survivors ran two years ago and were eliminated in the primary. Politics is a funny business. Good for them.

There were several good Republican candidates for county commissioner. It is so hard to run a campaign where voters, who are basically indifferent, unaware and apathetic toward politics, become acquainted enough with candidates and their positions to make intelligent and reasoned choices. That is why name recognition for an incumbent, whether they've done a good or poor job in office, is such a huge advantage.

On the Democratic side, Jeff Ketcham, who is seeking his 75th term, had a walkover and automatically advanced to the general election ballot. Surprisingly, the other Democrat candidate did no advertising and, as far as I could tell, mounted

no active campaign, yet received almost as many votes as did Ketcham (2,575 to 2,869). On the Republican side, newcomer Troy Thompson easily prevailed, finishing 1,200 votes ahead of incumbent Diane Humphrey who is seeking her fourth term. Current Cheyenne city councilwoman Judy Case finished third with Dale Meyer and Kelly Krakow in a dead heat for fourth/fifth. This was a good field.

If Troy Thompson can parlay his finish in the primary to the general election, at least one of the two commissioner incumbents will be eliminated. That brings up an interesting paradox for them. They oppose an increase from three to five county commissioners - one voiced reason being cost. Let's say one of them is defeated in November and voters approve the increase to five commissioners. Think either of them will run for the fourth or fifth seat when it's available in 2012? Me too.

Other contests in this past primary that were interesting included the Laramie County races for sheriff, clerk of district court and treasurer.

Danny Glick ran an aggressive and ambitious campaign and the two challengers were just not very competitive. As far as I've seen, Danny does the job and he has usually been accessible to and cooperative with me, something I could not say for the past chiefs of police. The fact that he travels for training should not be seen as a negative but as a plus. I want our sheriff to be prepared for crime solving and department management that other offices have found productive and beneficial. Having a new police chief with expertise in fields like drug recognition will also do us good, not harm.

Several women were candidates for clerk of district court and treasurer. It was a field, in general, of well-qualified candidates and candidates shouldn't take much out of their place of finish. Voters just won't get very involved in learning about qualifications for those offices. They find reasons to vote for whom they do and those reasons are not always the best candidate for the job. One candidate for treasurer focused on her holding a CPA certificate. That is an impressive but unnecessary for our county treasurer but she did get a lot of votes. She'll now have to view those billboards around town until NEXT Media can sell them to someone else. That has to be a downer. The two women who have spent several years each in the treasurer's office did not do as well as I thought they would. But elective office is not like a corporate hire - we don't always look for experience, something else often drives our vote.

Clerk of district court and county clerk seats will have contests on the general election ballot - sheriff and treasurer will not. While a guy tried to mount a write-in effort for sheriff, he came up short. It seems like anyone could get enough friends to write-in 25 votes to make it on the general election ballot but very, very few ever do and some of the efforts are extensive and orchestrated. Keith Goodenough could be on the ballot for state auditor through his write-in effort.