

Democrats not lacking for names to run

By [William Hershey](#)

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COLUMBUS | — Meet Subodh Chandra. He could be Ohio's answer to Barack Obama.

Meet Marc Dann. He calls himself a "livid visionary."

Chandra and Dann are a strange pair. Both are Democrats and want to run for the same office, attorney general.

There have been recent elections in which Ohio Democrats had trouble finding one, let alone two, qualified candidates to run for a statewide office.

Largely due to indicted coin-dealer Tom Noe, Gov. Bob Taft and assorted other Republicans with problems, Democrats were eager to get on this year's ballot. The party has a bunch of statewide primaries, including the state treasurer's race pitting Montgomery County Treasurer Hugh Quill against Franklin County Treasurer Richard Cordray.

It's the attorney general showdown, however, that's attracting attention.

Chandra has become the party's celebrity/rock star as he travels the state speaking at Democratic get-togethers.

"He gives a very good speech. He is very entertaining. When he's done, people like him," said Montgomery County Democratic Chairman Dennis Lieberman.

Chandra leads the crowds in an interactive name exercise for those who might find his hard to pronounce. He says Subodh rhymes with "abode" and Chandra rhymes with "tundra."

An unusual name is one thing he has in common with Obama, the son of a Kenyan man and a white Kansan woman. Obama was elected to the U.S. Senate from Illinois in 2004, the same year he wowed the crowd with a keynote speech at the Democratic National Convention.

Obama is the only black member of the U.S. Senate. Chandra, with his Asian Indian heritage, would give the Democratic ticket a jolt of diversity.

Chandra emphasizes that it's his professional background, including work as Cleveland city law director and an assistant U.S. attorney, that makes him the best candidate for the nomination.

The Ohio Democratic Party's executive committee, however, endorsed Dann, a lawyer and state senator from Trumbull County. Lieberman voted as a member of that committee to back Dann but, in what might seem like hair-splitting to those not involved in the political process says, he has not personally endorsed either candidate.

In any case, his wife, Debbie Lieberman, a Montgomery County commissioner, is supporting Chandra, Lieberman said.

Chandra said he didn't expect the party's endorsement against a sitting state senator. Dann has done more than fill space in the Senate. He's been the Democrats' attacker-in-chief, never missing a chance to highlight investment problems at the Bureau of Workers' Compensation, Taft's ethical woes or other alleged low lights of Republican rule.

In fact, Dann often comes across as perpetually angry about most everything. He says, however, that he really has a vision of how Ohio could do lots of great things if it had the money now wasted through unbid state contracts and other shenanigans.

"I'm a livid visionary," he said.

He has also had a few problems of his own, which Republicans like to bring up. Among them was the reprimand he got from the Ohio Supreme Court in 2004 for filing the wrong pleading in a case involving a client's effort to pay his ex-wife part of his pension.

The bigger question for the Democrats is whether either Dann or Chandra would have much of a chance against the likely Republican candidate for attorney general, Auditor Betty Montgomery, a popular statewide vote-getter who previously served two terms as attorney general.

Montgomery has her own primary battle for the Republican nomination against state Sen. Tim Grendell of Chesterland.

Grendell is another who's angry much of the time, but it's easy to pronounce his name.

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