

[< Back](#) | [Home](#)

State Attorney General race under way

Amanda Garrett

Posted: 4/5/06

Two state senators, a former Cleveland law director and the State Auditor are running in the May 2 primary for State Attorney General.

State Senator Marc Dann and former Cleveland Law Director Subodh Chandra are facing off in the Democratic primary, while Auditor Betty Montgomery is running against State Senator Tim Grendell in the Republican race. Chandra was the only candidate who returned calls for an interview by deadline.

Ohio's attorney general represents the legal interests of the state, engages in litigation on behalf of the state and defends the state when it is sued, political science professor Vernon L. Sykes said. Attorneys general provide counsel to Ohio's public universities, including Kent State.

The attorney general is also responsible for the Bureau of Criminal Identification and Investigation, which is the equivalent of Ohio's CSI unit. BCI&I works with local law enforcement at their request, Sykes said.

Attorneys general serve a four-year term. Unlike the federal attorney general, most state attorneys general are elected not appointed, Sykes said.

The major issue of this year's campaign is Republican corruption, Sykes said.

In the past, Republicans have had the advantage, but polls show voters with a "throw the bums out" attitude because of corruption, Sykes said.

"This election cycle, the issue of Republican corruption seems to give Democrats their best opportunity to capture statewide offices," he said.

Democrats have a lot of scandals to work with including the Coingate Scandal and Gov. Bob Taft's ethics violations, Sykes said.

"When they start airing TV commercials in the fall, it's going to get thick," he said. "Democrats have a lot of ammunition."

The candidate with the most name recognition, money and support is Montgomery, Sykes said. Montgomery is the current state auditor, and she was attorney general from 1995 to 2002.

Montgomery was running for Ohio governor, but she left the race because there were a lot of experienced, strong contenders in the Republican primary. And it was hard for her to get the type of support she needed in the polls, Sykes said.

Leadership in the Republican primary urged her to get out to make way for the more experienced candidates, which include current Attorney General Jim Petro and Secretary of State J. Kenneth Blackwell, Sykes said.

"The leadership was pushing her to leave to make way for all the other candidates so logically she went to the office she already had," he said. "She's a strong candidate. She's very comfortable in this race."

The Democratic race is much more competitive, Sykes said.

Although Dann has the official endorsement of the Democratic party, Subodh Chandra has an extensive legal background including Cleveland law director, Sykes said. "He's a very smart, good campaigner," she said. "The race is up in the air."

Chandra, who was called the "rock star" of the Democratic party by The Columbus Dispatch, has picked up key endorsements from Cleveland Mayor Frank Jackson, Rep. Dennis Kucinich and The Plain Dealer.

Chandra is running on the platform of being the people's lawyer and cleaning up the culture of corruption in Columbus, he said.

Chandra said if he becomes attorney general, he will look out for average Ohioans.

"The attorney general's job is as important as the governor's," he said. "The attorney general must do two things. First, he must ensure the economic prosperity of the state, and second, he must protect citizens from harm and loss. You can't have one without the other."

If elected, he wants to investigate the price of college textbooks, he said.

"The price of textbooks is exorbitant," he said. "I don't know whether there's any price gauging going on, but I'll investigate it and take legal action if there is."

Chandra said he believe issues like these will involve the young people in the attorney general's race.

"The future's at stake," he said. "From tuition to credit cards, there are so many people waiting to rip students off. The attorney general's office is a critical component to maintaining honest government. It's important not to hire someone who just has good intentions. It's important to hire someone who can do the job."

Contact public affairs reporter Amanda Garrett at agarrett@kent.edu.

© [Copyright 2006 Daily Kent Stater](#)