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Enquirer endorses: Democrat Chandra for attorney general

Both candidates for the Democratic attorney general nomination make strong cases as reformers who would fight corruption and influence-peddling in state government.

State Sen. Marc Dann, who sued Gov. Bob Taft for documents in the Bureau of Workers' Compensation "Coingate" scandal, is a tenacious political fighter who knows how Columbus works and seems unafraid to take on tough issues.

But Subodh Chandra, a former Cleveland law director, has a wider and deeper set of skills to bring to the multifaceted job of Ohio's top lawyer - a keen legal intellect, solid prosecutorial experience, management experience in a large public law firm, and an incisive view of what the AG can and should do to protect Ohioans.

Chandra is one of the most impressive statewide candidates Ohio Democrats have produced in years. We endorse him for his party's nomination.

An Oklahoma native, Chandra ran Cleveland's legal office efficiently and aggressively, going after fraud and waste, using a management style that fostered communication and motivation. Also on his resume are stints as a federal prosecutor and as a legal ethics professor at Case Western Reserve.

Chandra doesn't come across as overly partisan, and doesn't view himself as a politician. His engaging personal style would serve him well in working both sides of the aisle. A fiscally conservative, law-and-order type, he could appeal to Republican voters. But he's not afraid to go after the GOP's Jim Petro, the current AG, for what Chandra calls missteps on Coingate-related matters, a failure to go after predatory lenders - in fact, protecting those lenders from Chandra's attempts to rein them in - and other shortcomings.

Dann is articulate and impassioned on GOP misdeeds, and says he would be aggressive on regulatory enforcement. He led the way in exposing Coingate when few other Democrats would take on the task. But he could face questions on financial disclosure and taxes, along with ethical complaints on his handling of a recent legal case, which Republicans would pounce on in the fall.

Chandra, in contrast, released a 1,000-page package of information on himself, including his FBI background check. That openness, plus his talent, experience and focus on being Ohio's "protector from harm and loss," make Chandra the Democrats' stronger candidate.

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