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Ohio attorney general

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One of the most difficult choices Democratic voters will make on May 2 involves the race for Ohio attorney general. Both State Sen. Marc Dann and former Cleveland Law Director Subodh Chandra have the experience, vision and talent to be effective.

Chandra, however, is the better candidate. Although he lacks experience in elected office, his impressive private and public legal work has fully prepared him to be an outstanding attorney general.

The biggest challenge facing Chandra might well be an unusual ballot name, which may not resonate easily with voters. He muses that Illinois Sen. Barack Obama is his role model for increasing his name recognition. If voters can tune into Chandra's message, reflect on his impressive legal background and sense his passion for law and public service, they should understand that he is a rare political talent.

An attorney general serves as the lawyer of record for the people of Ohio. Chandra, who did an outstanding job as law director under former Mayor Jane Campbell, is well equipped to meet this mandate. He would work diligently to pursue predatory lenders - a primary reason why Ohio leads the nation in home foreclosures. He would also focus on consumer protection, the environment, and wage and safety laws. He vows a drastic reduction in spending on outside legal counsel.

It is the issue of special counsel on which Chandra, 38, and Dann, 44, most closely connect. The laddering out of such contracts has overly politicized the offices of recent attorneys general. Both candidates say they would bring greater transparency to the bidding of special counsel contracts and sever perceived ties between contributions and legal work.

Dann made his name a household word in political circles last year when he became the leading Democratic critic of GOP operative and rare-coin dealer Tom Noe and the Bureau of Workers' Compensation.

Dann helped keep the heat on wrongdoers affiliated with the Noe scandal and relentlessly pushed for ethics and campaign finance reforms. He's a formidable politician who, if he could control his tendency to grandstand, could serve ably as attorney general.

But Chandra, by virtue of proven private and public legal accomplishment, his exceptional stewardship over the Cleveland Law Department, his fine intellect and his plans to target political corruption, should be the nominee. There are two good candidates in this race, but Chandra is the better choice.

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