

## Dem race for attorney general bid teems with ambition

By Laura A. Bischoff

Staff Writer

**COLUMBUS** | Two Democrats who want to be Ohio's next attorney general both have ambitious plans for the office but are now busy elbowing one another to get their party's nomination.

State Sen. Marc Dann, D-Liberty Twp., 44, and Subodh Chandra, former Cleveland city law director, 38, both want to take pages from New York Attorney General Elliot Spitzer and use the Ohio attorney general's office to take on large-scale consumer issues, environmental problems and corporate misbehavior.

The Ohio Attorney General's office, which employs 1,300 people including 340 lawyers, represents state agencies, departments and boards and collects state debts. It also enforces consumer protection, charity, anti-trust and organized-crime laws and helps local law enforcement through the Bureau of Criminal Identification and Investigation.

Aside from the governor's office, attorney general is one of the highest profile statewide offices.

Chandra said he would take on predatory lenders and also present a plan to fix Ohio school funding, which the state Supreme Court has declared unconstitutional.

Dann said he would focus on giving good legal advice to his clients — lawmakers and state officials — before costly mistakes are made and beef up BCI labs so they can process evidence more promptly.

Dann, who had \$142,040 in his campaign war chest as of April 12, won endorsements from the Ohio Democratic Party and several unions, while Chandra, who had \$118,066 in his coffers, earned endorsements from the *Dayton Daily News*, The (Cleveland) *Plain Dealer*, *Akron Beacon Journal* and *Sun* newspapers.

Dann, who joined the state Senate in 2003 and served on the Liberty Twp. school board, portrays himself as "a street lawyer who tries to do what's right."

"I've spent my career representing ordinary people," he said. He said Chandra's career has been

dominated by representing big institutions.

Chandra bills himself as the "only lawyer with the skills, experience and integrity who can do the job."

He touts his experience and credentials as the reason Democrats should pick him: Yale University law school, private practice attorney from 1995 to '99, federal prosecutor from 1999 to 2002, Cleveland law director from 2002 to '05.

"It's not enough to say 'I've represented ordinary people' as he does," Chandra said. "The question is how extraordinary are their problems."

Political dirt on both Democrats has been publicly disclosed.

Dann failed to report a motorcycle jacket given to him by a lobbying group and was reprimanded by the Ohio Supreme Court for mishandling a client's case.

Chandra voluntarily disclosed his lengthy FBI background check from when he applied to be an assistant U.S. attorney. The material included the revelation that Chandra was treasurer of the Indian-American Leadership Investment Fund when a mentor used the political action committee to launder illegal campaign contributions. The Federal Election Commission declined to take action on the matter in 1996.

Both Chandra and Dann believe they can beat state Auditor Betty Montgomery, the likely Republican nominee who is seeking her old job. They heap criticism on Montgomery for her failure to discover problems with the Ohio Bureau of Workers' Compensation rare-coin investments.

Dann has been a leading critic of Republicans in charge during the dual investment scandal at the BWC. He sued Gov. Bob Taft for BWC-related documents and filed public records requests with the bureau, Attorney General Jim Petro and other state officials.

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