

OUR VIEW ATTORNEY GENERAL, DEMOCRATS

## Chandra best for attorney general

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You get the feeling that Democrats are using the primary race for attorney general as a dry run for the fall. Two bright lawyers are going at it like alley cats.

Subodh Chandra is the most qualified candidate, but he's not at all times behaving like the better man. The former federal prosecutor and director of Cleveland's law department has impressive experience. Frustrated that he didn't get the Democratic Party's endorsement, he's attacking Sen. Marc Dann, the other candidate, with a vengeance.

Mr. Chandra stops just short of accusing Sen. Dann of being unfit. He did make an embarrassing mistake — filing the wrong papers in a case, resulting in a reprimand from the Ohio Supreme Court. But on another matter, Mr. Chandra grossly and recklessly overstates his complaint about his opponent.

Mr. Chandra essentially accuses Sen. Dann of malpractice when, in fact, his criticism should be of a law partner of Sen. Dann's. A federal court judge has said Sen. Dann didn't do anything wrong.

Mr. Chandra's public record and his reputation are better than this behavior suggests, so one theory is that his excess zeal is attributable to his campaign inexperience. Whatever the explanation, he needs to give his hyperbole a rest.

Articulate and bright, Mr. Chandra says that he would be aggressive in pursuing consumer protection issues and ensuring that Ohio adhered to the Supreme Court decision about funding public schools. He says he thinks the crusading Eliot Spitzer, New York's attorney general, is a better model than Ohio's current attorney general (and GOP gubernatorial candidate) Jim Petro.

The son of immigrants from India, Mr. Chandra moved to Ohio to work for former Gov. Dick Celeste.

Sen. Dann has been one of the fiercest critics of Republicans' culpability in the "Coingate" scandal involving Republican contributor Tom Noe. He has an impressive mastery of the things that allowed the state to get into a risky and ridiculous investment. He has used the courts to try to air public documents that should be in the public domain and that have humiliated Republicans from the governor on down.

The deciding consideration in favor of Mr. Chandra is his management experience. The attorney

general's office is a large enterprise. Moving from a small law firm and Senate office would be a big leap for Sen. Dann who has shown a penchant for inattention to detail.

The fall attorney general campaign promises to be spirited, what with Democrats complaining that Republicans have fostered a culture of corruption in Columbus that has gone unchecked. Mr. Chandra should be Democrats' choice for this race.

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