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CHAMPAIGN AND URBANA

Local GOP Focus should be on Jamar Brown's race for School Board on April 5th

Posted @ 1/26/2011 1:01 AM By Craig Walker

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There are rare opportunities for a political party to make significant inroads into a constituency that has not traditionally voted for their candidates. At this time at this moment the Republican Party of Champaign County has that opportunity.

The Champaign School Board has an election on April 5 2011 and in that election an Independent candidate Jamar Brown is running to be the sole minority representative on the Champaign School Board. Jamar Brown shares many of the same principals of the local GOP such as personal responsibility and fiscal responsibility. His candidacy is important to our community because diversity on the Champaign School Board is essential, especially because of the high level of minority students in the school system.

I am urging the local GOP to campaign for and with Jamar Brown in communities all across this City. By embracing this fine man and demonstrating a commitment to diversity the local GOP can build upon the great work City Councilman Will Kyles has done in the African American community advocating as a Republican with the party ideals. I have seen the credibility of Councilman Kyles grow within his District as a known Republican with the principles and ideals of the party and how they can benefit the African American community. He recruited Jamar to run and is working hard within his District to achieve a healthy turnout to help Mr. Brown win.

If Jamar Brown is successful in his quest for a school board seat with GOP support and if between May of 2011 and September of 2012 the local GOP is seen advocating for policies of inclusion for the African American community and actually deliver results then the stage will be set. You see, at this point in time the City of Champaign in the last fiscal year let over 100 professional contracts to vendors, (most of them out of town vendors) and the amount that went to minority owned companies was zero. Essentially the benchmark is so low it's pitiful. I know the leaders of the local GOP personally and I am certain that none of them feel that this statistic is fair or a reflection of what our community aspires to be. If the local GOP is seen within the African American community espousing the ideals of personal responsibility, fiscal responsibility AND inclusion of local and minority owned businesses with results that increase the percentage of participation in City contracts by both local and minority vendors, the local GOP can make significant inroads with minority voters. In a year (2012) when large turnouts will be expected in the minority communities, and a newly appointed Republican County Clerk that has never won a County wide election running his first race, the GOP will need to compete hard for every vote and what better place to harvest new voters to the party then a constituency that has been basically ignored and taken for granted by the Democrats?

I must comment that the risk to the Party is the Mayor's race. I do call Mayor Schweighart a friend, and yesterday I informed him I was supporting Independent candidate Don Gerard who is also a fiscal conservative with ideals of personal responsibility, because I believe the time for generational change in Champaign has come. The Mayor continues to assert that the President is not a US Citizen and therefore not legitimate. That is his opinion and he has a right to it. One of my principal pillars in life is that we can agree to disagree and still work together. However not everyone shares this view and so if the local GOP is aggressively advocating for the Mayor in this upcoming election, then the road to making significant gains of the minority vote within Champaign is longer, more difficult and maybe impossible in a short 15 months.

I am not advocating for the abandonment of Mayor Schweighart, I just believe the Party has to be smart and to fight for him all out will damage the party's credibility in the City. Even the National Party believes this and just last Sunday GOP leader Eric Cantor signaled that the birther issue is put to bed by the GOP and will not be an issue in the 2012 election. Personal responsibility includes the acceptance of the consequences and the Mayor must accept the consequences associated with making comments that are offensive to many people and really have no relevance to the good work he has done in our community and the work that is needed to be done ahead.

I envision a day or two or more in September/October when Gordy Hulten and other GOP candidates can walk the neighborhoods of North Champaign with Will Kyles, Jamar Brown, and Karen Foster and signal not only a new day for the local GOP within the minority community, but also point to success stories within the First District that have come about due the efforts of the GOP leadership and the implementation of their











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ideals. This is that moment, this is that time, and a new day of alliances among the minority community and the local GOP with a foundation of personal responsibility, fiscal responsibility, and inclusion/diversity can make positive change for our City that will be admired for years and years to come.

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Mr. Walker has over 20 years of experience as an Investment Banker. A townie and product of the Unit 4 school system, Mr Walker has spent most of his career in New York City and Los Angeles before returning to live in Champaign in 2004. Currently a Senior Vice President in Capital Markets for Blaylock Robert Van LLC , a New York based investment banking firm, Mr Walker has also worked for the investment banking firms, SBK Brooks Securities, Daniels and Bell, Prudential Securities, and Entertainment Finance Associates. He has served as lead banker and structured over \$5 billion in debt and equity transactions in the capital markets for his clients. Mr. Walker has a BA in Economics from the University of Illinois - Chicago.

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