

Marco Rubio now for Arizona law

Initially was against immigration measure

Betty Parker • Parkerspolitics@aol.com • May 8, 2010

1:10 A.M. — When U.S. Senate candidate Marco Rubio, a Cuban-American Republican from Miami, said almost two weeks ago Arizona's new immigration law went "too far," many observers believed he wanted to broaden his appeal beyond the far-right embrace of the crackdown.

His initial criticism won him headlines and public praise from others who questioned the law, and seemed to give him an inroad to more moderate voters.

But this week Rubio took a step from his original criticism, backtracking into the groups who support the law. He told the conservative website "Human Events" this week the measure, as signed into law by Arizona's governor, is something he supports.

He also said while Florida has a large Hispanic population, Arizona's border state status makes it a different situation. "Arizona has a physical border with Mexico," he said. "And there is kidnappings, human trafficking, drug wars coming across that border ... frankly, very few states in America can imagine what that's like."

Schultz returns home

Republican John Schultz, who retired last week from his Florida Highway Patrol job providing security for Lt. Gov. Jeff Kottkamp, is back home in Fort Myers and ready to run in the race for state House seat 73, which has two GOP candidates, Matt Caldwell and Jason Moon.

Schultz entered the race with endorsements from Lee County Sheriff Mike Scott, and Kottkamp - not unexpected but interesting because Kottkamp and Caldwell share close allies.

Schultz said he's attending events and working to meet voters and learn their concerns. Although Moon has raised six figures for the race, and Caldwell is a long-time activist who's been

campaigning for months, Schultz said he brings his law enforcement and other real-world experience to the race.

"I'm not running against them," he said when asked about his opponents. "I'm focused on getting my message out and meeting the voters to talk about the issues and my background."

As Kottkamp's security, Schultz was often mentioned in stories about controversies over who paid for Kottkamp's plane flights between Tallahassee and Fort Myers, and more recent stories about Kottkamp's use of Republican Party credit cards for \$47,000 worth of expenses such as trips for whitewater rafting and Disney World. Kottkamp, who's running for attorney general, said the trips involved entertaining big party donors.

Schultz said as Kottkamp's security guard, he was required to accompany Kottkamp on such events. "That was my job," he said, noting the party sometimes paid his expenses so the state did not have to. "I think people will understand that" it was part of his employment, he said.

Caldwell, meanwhile, picked up a big endorsement. Marco Rubio announced his support for Caldwell's candidacy. Caldwell was Rubio's Lee County campaign chairman until Caldwell entered the House race.

Caldwell and Moon have been walking door-to-door to meet voters.

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The GOP primary winner will meet Democrat Cole Peacock in November. The primary is Aug. 24.

800 donations

Gov. Charlie Crist's ability to raise money for his U. S. Senate race - a critical factor in a state as large as Florida - has been a point of debate since his decision to run for the U.S. Senate as a no-party candidate.

It's not a matter lost on Crist; almost as soon as he announced his departure from the Republican Party, he also launched a fundraising campaign to raise \$100,000 by Sunday.

His campaign staff believe he's well on the way: Crist got more than 800 donations in less than a week after announcing his change, and logged more hits to his website than since the campaign started.

Although 20 Republican party officials and donors wrote Crist this week asking him to return donations they gave him as a Republican, records show only nine of them had given money, and one of those, former Fort Myers resident Al Hoffman, asked for and got back his donations last February because of his displeasure over the former party chairman.

Many of the remaining 12 signers, including Lee County's Republican Executive Committee Chairman Gary Lee, were early backers of Republican Marco Rubio.

Crist supporters, meanwhile, note two post-switch polls that show Crist leading in the three-way race with Rubio and Democrat U.S. Rep. Kendrick Meek of Miami.

Pollsters say that lead will tighten once the parties start ads for their candidates but additional data in this week's Mason-Dixon poll indicated Crist may be better off than believed.

Among voters over 50 - a sought-after group because they're the most reliable voters - Crist leads larger than his overall six points. Among voters 50-64, Crist got 40 percent; Rubio, 32; and Meek, 18. With voters over 65 - even more likely voters - Crist had 47 percent; Rubio, 24 and Meek, 17. Younger voters preferred Rubio, but getting them to turn out is a perennial problem.

One of Meek's biggest problems is he's less known than Crist and Rubio. Money can help raise name ID, but even in Southeast Florida, home base for Meek and Rubio, Crist collected 37 percent, Meek, 31, and Rubio, 23.

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