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Baton Rouge, Louisiana

ROEMER BEING COY IN THE U. S. SENATE RACE

Former Governor Buddy Roemer is staying below radar but is still actively considering a run for John Breaux's open U. S. Senate seat this fall. A recent non-partisan poll shows Roemer in an initial strong position to make the runoff.

In the poll conducted by Vern Kennedy, Roemer runs second to the present leader, Congressman David Vitter. The numbers show:

1. Congressman David Vitter – 28
2. Former Governor Buddy Roemer – 19
3. Treasurer John Kennedy – 17
4. Congressman Chris John – 17
5. Rep. Arthur Morrell – 7

Roemer has frozen potential support in both parties that might have gone to one of the other major candidates. For example, Shaw CEO Jim Bernhardt has told both John Kennedy and Chris John that even though he is a staunch democrat; it would be hard for him not to support Roemer, who serves on the Shaw Board of Directors.

Roemer envisions the potential of being in a runoff with Vitter. That's assuming that Arthur Morrell is a serious candidate, and can raise enough money to build his identity, particularly in the African American community. If so, Roemer feels that Morrell's support will work against both Kennedy and John, and then he and Vitter can fight it out in the runoff. Roemer has always acted more as a Democrat than a Republican, so he would hope to end up with the lion's share of the black vote.

The polls show that Roemer, as well as Kennedy and John, all run a dead heat when facing Vitter one on one. Vitter polls well over 15% in the black community, so the conventional wisdom is that he can't hold this against any of the potential runoff candidates, including Roemer. Therefore, those analyzing the numbers conclude that anybody beats Vitter in the runoff. It's a question of getting there.

The polls show Roemer with high name recognition (91%), but also with a very solid negative of 30%. Vitter carries a 2 ½ to one positive-negative rating, John a 4 to 1 positive-negative rating, and Kennedy comes out the best with a 5 to 1 ratio.

This would be an interesting match up considering that Kennedy served as Executive Counsel to then Governor Roemer, and they have been friends for many years. Roemer feels he has time to decide with his name recognition, and a commitment of strong potential supporters that they will "hold the line" for a while. He has set a date of the 1st

of June to make a final decision. In the meantime, the other candidates are doing one thing and one thing alone in the coming weeks. Raising money. And it is unfortunate, but the winner will raise twice as much money out of state as he will in the state. That's not in Louisiana's interest, but that's how the system works.

BILLIONS (NOT MILLIONS) LOST BECAUSE OF MAJOR POLITICAL BLUNDERS

Louisiana has more natural wealth than many of the other southern states put together. But three major political blunders over the last fifty years have cost this state many billions of dollars. We will spend the next several decades trying to make up for the money that was lost in the past. And with a little common sense, it all could have been avoided.

Louisiana's single biggest missed opportunity was the financial debacle that took place in the early 1950's when Earl Long was the state's governor, and Judge Leander Perez ran Plaquemines Parish with an iron fist. For years, the state and the feds bickered and fought over where the Louisiana borders ended and federal jurisdiction began. At stake were not millions, but literally billions of future dollars in oil and gas reserves.

Senators Ellender and Long struck with what would have been a heck of deal with then President Harry Truman. Louisiana would get all of the royalty income for the first three miles off our coast, and then split everything else over the next ten miles 50-50 with the feds. Earl Long was ready to sign on, when Judge Perez stepped in. "To hell with the Feds. We are not going to give them 50%. We want the whole thing!"

Earl Long wasn't willing to take on the Judge, and besides, it was election year on the national level. Truman wasn't running, and if the Judge got behind Eisenhower, a much better deal might be struck.

Eisenhower won the election, and carried 93% of the vote in Plaquemines Parish, the highest percentage of any parish or county in the nation. But the new President, according to Perez and the two senators, reneged on pre-election commitments and only let the state have possession of land within three miles of the shore line. The Judge had expected 10 ½ miles southward with a baseline that would be drawn to include all of Louisiana's many coastal indentations.

The bottom line? It's hard to determine the billions of dollars lost to Louisiana if the original deal had been made with President Truman. Here's a simple way to figure it. If Perez had not stopped the original proposition offered by Truman,

here's what would be happening today. There would be no Louisiana income taxes, no sales taxes, no property taxes or any other tax. In addition, every man, woman and child in Louisiana could expect to receive a substantial yearly check in excess of \$3,000.00 a year that would continue for the rest of their lives. Simply put, it was the single biggest missed opportunity of any state in the history of our country.

Mistake Number Two – The failure to segregate and dedicate the dramatic increase of oil and gas income coming into the state treasury in the early 1970's. I was elected to the Louisiana State Senate in 1972; Edwin Edwards' first term in office. The day I was sworn in, a barrel of oil sold for \$2.15. Natural gas was taxed at a flat fee, so when the price went up, there was no additional income to the state.

All of that changed in 1972, when the tax on both gas and oil was put on a percentage, and the price of oil started rising. The price continued to go up and up. When I left office in 1979, a barrel of oil was approaching \$40.00. Front page stories in The Wall Street Journal were projecting a barrel of oil to hit \$72.00 in a matter of a few years. The state treasury was overflowing with new and growing income and only Texas was cashing in on a similar bonanza.

There was little concern for savings accounts and rainy-day funds. No concern about the future. This gravy train just wasn't going to end. It wasn't just the fault of elected officials. The editorial writers and the good government groups raised little if any concern. When the bottom dropped out in the early 1980's, we were in it over our heads, with colleges and trade schools sprouting up everywhere. New roads, new buildings, and other new construction right and left. Little concern over maintaining what we already had. It was good politics, to build, build, build.

The opportunity to plan and save for the future was never really given any serious consideration. We are paying for this mistake today, and will continue to do so for many years to come.

Mistake Number Three - It's a doozy!! Over six billion dollars lost by the state in the past four years. A long explanation is necessary so I'll have to save it until next week. The point to be made is that there are opportunities and untapped sources for federal funds if proper analysis takes place on a state level.

MORE ON MARTHA STEWART

Martha's lawyers are asking for a new trial. After the verdict, the jurors' names were made public and the lawyers now claim that one of the jurors who convicted her lied about his own criminal background. The juror, one Chappel Hartridge, was all over television after the trial touting that he believed the decision was "a victory for little guys". He supposedly is already looking for a book deal.

It is pretty obvious he would have been struck from the jury by the defense if they would have known about his criminal background. But he lied and there certainly is reason for Stewart to raise a question in her request for a new trial.

Now get ready. Here I go again. Louisiana, one more time, is different. To this day, I have no idea as to who the jurors are in my case. Their names have been "permanently sealed" and I will never know who they are. If a juror lied in my case on a detailed questionnaire they are required to fill out, if there was some conflict of interest involving some family incident of years past, I would have no way of knowing. It is extremely rare for the names of jurors to be kept secret "forever". But that's what happened in my case. Remember the juror that went on television and said the jury made a mistake in convicting me? Yes, she went public, but she used an assumed name.

Just one more example of how forty-nine states under what is supposed to be a uniform federal judicial system operate one way, and federal courts in Louisiana go in a completely different direction. Good luck, Martha. You are getting a much fairer shake than I did.

"The law isn't justice. It's a very imperfect mechanism. If you press exactly the right buttons and are also lucky, justice may show up in the answer. A mechanism is all the law was ever intended to be."

--Raymond Chandler

"The whole aim of practical politics is to keep the populace alarmed (and hence clamorous to the led to safety) by menacing it with an endless series of hobgoblins, all of them imaginary."

--H. L. Mencken

Peace and justice to you and your family.

Jim Brown