



NEWS/ANALYSIS: MN GOP “Candidate-Journalist” completes ten days & 35 hours campaigning for Governor at GOP state fair booth; reports on feedback for advocating President Trump “resign or be impeached”; brands two GOP Governor candidates as “extreme right”

Contact: bobagaincarneyjr@gmail.com; cell phone: (612) 812-4867

Minneapolis 9/6/17 – In the “age of Trump” the Minnesota GOP was clearly “alive and, well... something...” at this year’s Minnesota State Fair. But as to what that “something” is, more time, observation, and shaping are required, based on 35 hours spent over ten days by “Candidate-Journalist” Bob “Again” Carney Jr., (“bobagain.”) During that time, bobagain talked to hundreds of voters about many topics, including President Trump, who bobagain says should “either resign or be impeached.” Here are some “bullet point” takeaways:



bobagain campaigns at the Minnesota State Fair – 8/30/17

- Given the extraordinary “age of Trump” situation, the overall “event vibe” was surprisingly normal at a superficial level, based on bobagain’s comparison to his 2011 campaign for the U.S. Senate, when he spent about the same number of days and the same total hours campaigning at the same GOP booth. “The tens of thousands of people who walked by the booth in 2011 looked the same as the tens of thousands that walked by this year. However, this year I would estimate that on average someone gave the booth ‘the finger’ about once an hour – that never happened in 2011. But during my entire time this year I was never accosted by anyone walking by. Although I spoke with many people who were from slightly to strongly opposed to President Trump, including self-described Republicans and former Republicans, none of my conversations were what you would call ‘heated’ – everyone was civil,” bobagain said. Of course, one obvious explanation is that people who go to the State Fair are there to have a good time – people with “Trump issues” can just walk on by the GOP booth... “out of sight, out

of mind” in ten seconds... or maybe: “Forward... to Sweet Martha’s Cookies!” (two booths down.)

- Overall, the Minnesota Republican Party appears to be noticeably energized, but also sometimes evidenced an almost “under the radar” or “stealth” mentality. “A lot of folks walking by would give me a sort of semi-furtive ‘thumbs up’ – a ‘Trump gesture,’” bobagain commented (see page 4 for a photo of the “Trump gesture.”) Traffic in the booth appeared to be brisk and steady – there were probably an average of fifteen to twenty visitors inside at any one time. At an average of ten minutes a stay, that would translate to over 10,000 visits during the twelve-day event. About 113,000 Minnesotans attended the 2016 precinct caucuses – close to double the previous record of 65,000 in 2008. “Among Trump supporters, there appeared to be a consensus view that ‘the media’ is unrelentingly and unfairly hostile. One visitor emphasized to me (paraphrasing): ‘We don’t talk about Trump with ‘outsiders’ – only among family,’” bobagain added.

- Among visitors to the GOP booth there appeared to be a widespread consensus of overall support for President Trump, but it was so intermixed with a high, near-toxic, level of hostility towards Hillary Clinton that it’s difficult to assess the view of President Trump separately. A strong dislike (or worse) of Hillary Clinton is clearly the rock-solid baseline of today’s Minnesota Republican Party. “I don’t recall anyone at the booth who had anything good to say about Hillary Clinton,” bobagain commented.

- There was a significant contingent of both Republicans and people who described themselves as ‘former Republicans’ who had either a mixed reaction to President Trump, or who were to varying degrees hostile and/or opposed to him. But among this group, there seemed to be little prior consideration of the possibility that he might be impeached, or pressured to resign. More specifically, almost no one seemed to be thinking in terms of: “would we be better off with a President Pence?”
- Regarding one of bobagain’s major issues – a campaign to stop or reroute the proposed Southwest Light Rail line – his position is supported by almost everyone he talked with. Both Light Rail and the Metro Council are almost universally disliked and opposed by Republicans.



Everyone gets tired towards the end – but the Trump & Pence cardboard cutouts were especially the worse for wear by day ten. Usually only the cardboard President shows up -- Trump obviously needs more support.

Assessments of other 2018 GOP statewide candidates

- **Governor --** Of four “major” contenders, the clear front runner appears to be Hennepin County Commissioner **Jeff Johnson**, who was the party’s nominee in 2014. The other three, former State Chair **Keith Downey**, State Rep. **Matt Dean**, and State Sen. **David Osmek** all have significant support. All but Sen. Osmek had their own booths at the fair. All have committed to abide by the Convention endorsement. While it is difficult to see how anyone except Commissioner Johnson could obtain the 60% necessary for that endorsement, a deadlocked convention is a real possibility; commitments to “abide by the endorsement” must be seen in that context. Excepting bobagain (of course,) none of the other candidates appear to have “something special” to offer that might ignite their campaigns.



Shop the competition! – Sweet Martha’s Cookies was two booths down – they have three locations at the State Fair, and make about three million cookies on site on a busy day. Most of the people in this picture are in line to buy some – they’re blocking almost the entire street, but nobody is protesting.

As an overall assessment, based on statements of the major GOP candidates for Governor at a Labor Day forum in the back of the Republican party booth, bobagain classified as “extreme right” two of the major candidates for Governor, based on their budget views. All candidates are clearly “targeting the base,” but Osmek and Downey are using bunker-busters when they hit Gov. Dayton’s budget record. Both want the next biennial budget to be \$42 billion – about \$3 billion less than the current one. Johnson said his budget will be less than the current budget, but provided no number. Dean also provided no number, but the thrust of his answer was that the budget is out of control. Downey said his 4-year plan was for a 15% reduction in overall spending. As historical background, Governor Pawlenty shrunk the average annual increase to about 2.5% during his eight-year tenure – compared to an average annual increase of 10% for the forty years before he took office. Governor Dayton’s average annual increase is in the 5% to 6% range – about half way between Governor Pawlenty’s average and the ‘Pre-Pawlenty’ baseline. Bobagain offered this comment: “Going forward, given the low inflation trend for recent years, Minnesota’s ‘baseline budget answer’ is more towards Governor Pawlenty’s record than Governor Dayton’s unsustainable rate. But absent a major economic downturn – and let’s hope there isn’t one -- the idea of zero growth in overall state spending beyond one biennial budget is totally unrealistic. Suggesting a \$3 billion cut for the next biennium is ridiculous. The GOP State Senate

majority in the next biennium is one vote; every DFLer would vote against such a plan, and there would inevitably be at least one GOP crossover. Even if such a budget could be enacted, it would be something that Minnesotans would reject decisively when they learned the real-world consequences. This whole ‘anti-government’ mindset needs to be challenged.” Note: bobagain was not permitted to participate in the forum because he had not signed a party agreement, possibly due to a misunderstanding. “Had I known of the forum, I would have assertively sought a copy, to consider signing it,” bobagain said.

- **Attorney General** – Although the Attorney General’s office has been held by the DFL since 1970, when the last Republican Attorney General, Douglas Head, lost the Governor’s race to Wendy Anderson, the Republicans have two smart, well-spoken candidates: long-time (but still young) activist Harry Niska from Anoka, and former one-term State Rep. Doug Wardlow from Eagan. Both are attorneys. This race may be drawing high quality candidates due to anticipation that the current Attorney General, Lori Swanson, may run for Governor, leaving an open seat. Niska and Wardlow engaged in an animated, fast-talking forum in the rear of the GOP booth, along with a candidate for...



- **U.S. Senate** – State Rep. Jim Newberger, in his third term from Becker, is the only announced GOP candidate; his participation in the Attorney General’s forum was probably in part because he couldn’t very well debate himself. It seems possible if not likely that no one else will enter this race on the GOP side – for two reasons. First, the incumbent, Sen. Amy Klobuchar, is an overwhelming favorite to win re-election to a third term. Second, Rep. Newberger’s background as paramedic is likely to resonate with a lot of Minnesotans who voted for President Trump.

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