

## The Roswell City Council's "Gutless Gang of Five" bails on Price

Price had the guts to offer the resolution. But she couldn't muster as much as a single "second" from any one of her five city council colleagues. We'll tag them: Roswell's "gutless gang of five."

**Political Analysis** / February 12th, 2011

John Fredericks / Staff

## GOP Grassroots to Nathan: "No Deal" In State Party Chairman's Race

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"We're not going to let Gov. Deal co-opt the Republican Party from the grassroots," said Debbie Dooley, one of the original 22 co-founders of the National Tea Party movement.

Dooley [pictured below], a chief organizer and current co-coordinator of the Georgia Tea Party Patriots -- one of the largest groups of its kind in the nation claiming more than 50,000 members -- says that Tea Party grassroots activists are not taking too kindly to what she refers to as Deal's state Republican Party power grab. "A lot of our members are upset because of what the Governor is doing -- essentially using the power and influence of the governor's office to promote his hand-picked candidate to take control of the state party. The party belongs to the grassroots, not the governor or his cronies," added Dooley. She vowed to work tirelessly to stop the "coup" in its tracks. And Dooley has put her money where her mouth is. The longtime party activist organized a training session several weeks ago for Tea Party faithful to get involved in the state GOP chairman selection process. "We had over 150 grassroots members from across the state come to our training session. They want to get involved in the process and we showed them how to do it," Dooley explained. "From that, many of our members have conducted local meetings as well."

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### BATTLE OF THE TITANS: IT'S JOHNNY VS. NATHAN



The hotly contested race for Ga. Republican Party Chair includes three very formidable candidates: Cobb County's Sue Everhart, the incumbent who is running for a third two-year term, and is a staunch ally of Ga. Senior U.S. Senator Johnny Isakson; Fulton County Republican Chairman Shawn Hanley, and Deal's culled candidate, the upstart Tricia Pridemore, also from Cobb County.

The race for party chair essentially pits Deal's candidate Pridemore against longtime Isakson confidante Everhart. Hanley is the wild card in what is sure to be a very volatile and close contest.

Pridemore was most recently state coordinator for the 9-12 Project while serving on Cobb County's Republican Party Executive Committee. A former small business owner of a software development company, Pridemore was a key volunteer in Nathan Deal's gubernatorial campaign, where she raised over \$100,000 toward his successful run. "Tricia was an invaluable member of our team and a calming influence during tough times," stated one high level Deal insider. "Deal is well known in both political and business circles for his loyalty to those who stand by him in rough waters."

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Pridemore's [pictured right] former company, Accucast, developed proprietary integrative and multi-layered data base management software for some of the southeast's largest corporations, including Delta, Jack Daniels, Wal-Mart, Bank of America and Bed and Bath. Pridemore says her technology background is a key component of her credentials. "I've organized Tea Parties and 9-12 events across the state," Pridemore said. "I bring fresh ideas, I'm technologically savvy, and I'll get a lot of new people involved in the Republican Party at the grassroots level," she promised.



When asked why she was challenging Everhart, Pridemore inferred that the state party was stuck in the mud. "The state GOP has little or no database marketing capability, we need more transparency and I firmly believe that its time for the grassroots to have a productive relationship -- and a bi-directional dialogue -- with the GOP," Pridemore said.

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Everhart [pictured left] called Pridemore's allegations "outrageous" and defended her leadership. "We are required by law to file financial disclosures with the Federal Election Commission, which is a matter of public record," the long-time activist and incumbent countered. "We have some of the best state of the art technology in the nation and we have embraced all those who want to join us. As a matter of fact, Tricia approached me last year and I involved her in the state Party by giving her a key role on our technology committee. Now she's criticizing her own work. Her fingerprints are all over our technological advancements," Everhart said. "Her statements are insulting and an affront to every active Republican member in this state," Everhart concluded.

#### **PRIDEMORE OFF AND RUNNING - TO THE TUNE OF \$100K**

Pridemore, a relative novice to electoral politics, is leaving nothing to chance. She has committed to spend around \$100,000 of her own money to win the chairmanship -- a volunteer position that has no remuneration tied to it. She has hired two full time campaign staffers, bought a plethora of Internet ads, sent out a high profile direct mail piece and invested in a number of websites. Pridemore confirmed that she is raising funds from supporters as well.

"Anytime you go up against an [entrenched] incumbent, it requires funding to win," Pridemore explained. "I've been blessed with resources, and this is my way of giving back to promote the causes and beliefs that I think will benefit my state and my country."

But her chief opponent questioned the motive. "Why would anyone spend that kind of money to win a volunteer position?" Everhart asked. "The last time I looked, the state chair was not for sale to the highest bidder." Everhart says that Pridemore uses her money to wine and dine potential delegates. "When she rolls in to an event it's like meals on wheels," Everhart mused.

Pridemore countered that Everhart's comment was akin to the pot calling the kettle black. "Sue uses state party staffers and her state funded email account to campaign for re-election," Pridemore said. Pridemore produced Everhart campaign oriented emails from one of her paid staff, executive director Rick Richardson. "Rick is paid out of state party funds that are supposed to be used to elect Republican candidates, not to re-elect Sue Everhart," she said. A check of the state party by-laws did not prohibit email or staff use for chairman re-election purposes. "There may not be a rule against it, but it is just not the right thing to do," Pridemore claimed. "Everhart, in an effort to hold onto power, is swinging everything at me but the kitchen sink."

#### **HOW IN THE HECK DOES THIS WORK, ANYWAY?**

The election process to determine the next Ga. Republican Party chair is a convoluted and complicated operation that best represents a quintessential "inside baseball" scenario if there ever was one. First, registered voters who claim to be Republicans must first physically show up at a series of local "mass meetings" held across the state and divided by house districts, which were held on Saturday, February 12. Once verified, those in attendance had to declare their desire to be "delegates" to their respective countywide conventions, which are held on Saturday, March 12. At the county convention, those delegates who want to vote in the state chairman's race must ask their respective rules committee convention chairman to be placed into nomination for a state delegate. Their nomination as a state delegate is then confirmed by voice vote of the county delegates in attendance, or an opponent can challenge them from the floor. Then an election takes place. Those seeking to be statewide delegates can either be slated as delegates if there is room, or as an alternate. Naturally, a lot of political horse-trading goes on behind the scenes. Once any potential delegates get through that, they then have to show up in Macon -- of all places -- on May 14 for the state convention. Any alternates in their respective county who attend can then replace those who don't show up. So any potential delegate to the state convention has to give up at least three Saturday's of their life to vote for a chairman and other officers of their choice. This proposition is not for the faint of heart or the casual party onlooker. It's an election by the hardest core of Republican Party activists.

**CHAIR VS. GOV. RIFT DATES BACK TO PERDUE**

It's safe to say there was no love lost between Georgia's first Republican governor since Reconstruction, Sonny Perdue [pictured below] and Everhart. Perdue never trusted the GOP Party Chairwoman and often referred to her privately as "Johnny's girl" (referencing Sen. Isakson). Perdue even sent one of his campaign staffers, Ben Frye, over to the party headquarters as the Executive Director, a key paid staff position that reports directly to the Chairman, but it didn't heal the rift. The good faith attempt by both Perdue and Sue proved unsuccessful. Perdue was sideways with Everhart for a number of reasons, the primary being that the former governor didn't think Everhart was raising enough money for the party. As a result, Perdue commenced his own PAC to raise money for his preferred candidates, and attempted to oust Everhart with his own handpicked candidate, to no avail. "Sonny and Sue just didn't click, it's that simple," said one Republican, who is close to Perdue. "Sue wouldn't do things for Sonny and Sonny wouldn't do things for Sue."

But the legacy of that tarnished relationship may be the catalyst that inspired Deal to seek his own candidate for GOP state chairman: Pridemore. "Nathan wants somebody he can work with," offered one GOP operative with ties to the governor's office, but is not authorized to speak to the press. "This is Nathan's way of controlling the state party's fundraising, the money (estimated to be about \$10 million in 2012) and the Tea Party and 9-12 activists. It's the best way for him to lead the Republican Party in Georgia."



Alex Kaufman, a lawyer and GOP activist from Fulton County, has endorsed Hanley for the job. "Shawn has done a great job in rebuilding our county party infrastructure, implementing state of the art technology and leading with enthusiasm, passion, vigor and vision," Kaufman said. "He's taken some bold risks to try and elect Republicans in tough situations. He'd serve our state party well in part because he is willing to challenge traditionally Democratic controlled seats."



But Kaufman says he gets the governor's position, too. "It's really smart politics if you think it through," the attorney said. "Tricia is a formidable 9-12 activist group leader, and they [Deal and Pridemore] have a close, trusting relationship." Kaufman acknowledges that the endorsement could backfire on Pridemore, though.

"Personally, although I know Tricia well and I believe that she is a principled person, a hard worker and good candidate, I prefer to have someone with great grassroots connections that is not tied to the governor's office, and Shawn Hanley fits that profile for me," Kaufman added. As for Everhart, Kaufman was succinct: "Sue is a super lady and a friend who has done a good job – but two terms is enough."

Ironically, the state party GOP by-laws previously mandated a two-term limit for the chair. But Everhart supporters amended that rule at the last state convention to clear a path for their candidate to seek a third term should she choose to do so. Everhart took them up on it.

**GEORGIA TEA PARTY: FOLLOW THE MONEY**

"For years the Georgia Republican Party has served as nothing more than a tool for establishment politicians to get themselves re-elected," says Bill Evelyn, founder of the State of Georgia Tea Party, LLC. "They'd work to elect Republicans regardless of their philosophy, whether they were conservative, moderate or liberal. Our goal is to change that." Evelyn, who just returned from a week at the Conservative Political Action Conference in Wash., D.C. says his groups, who number in the thousands across the state, have taken a page out of former President Ronald Reagan's book from 1977. "We can build a third party or we can revitalize the second party," Reagan said, in an historic CPAC speech in 1977, after he lost the GOP nomination to Gerald Ford. "Like Reagan in 1977, we prefer the latter," Evelyn said. "The chairman of the state GOP has to be willing to embrace the grassroots and give them the level of influence and the representation that is [commensurate] with their contribution."

Evelyn says those that are in alignment with his state and local Party philosophy "are turning out in huge numbers across the state at the GOP district mass meetings to make a difference." The noted activist, who said his group focuses on statewide issues, maintains that Tricia Pridemore is not going to get many votes from "those who support the grassroots ideals."

"Nathan Deal wants Tricia Pridemore to become state party Republican Chairman for one reason," Evelyn theorized, "so he can control where the Party money goes. Then Deal can funnel money to his favorite constituents, [consultants] and vendors. They can then contribute money back to his re-election campaign and maybe help him relieve his \$2.4 million in personal debt after that."

Evelyn asserts that for this reason, Pridemore is a goner with his allies. "Tricia is aligned with Nathan, and Deal is not the state Tea Party choice or the grassroots choice," Evelyn said, flatly.

He says he is supporting Hanley. "Sue is a very charming and highly intelligent lady," Evelyn

commented, "but she currently represents the establishment that we are seeking to change in principal."

As for Hanley, Evelyn says his choice is clear: "Shawn Hanley **[pictured below]** embraces our ideals and is most closely aligned philosophically with the vision and vitality of the grassroots."



#### **WILL THE REAL TEA PARTY CANDIDATE PLEASE STAND UP?**

As it currently stands, none of the three candidates for GOP chair can lay sole claim to the Tea Party's mantle. First, the Tea Party movement is fragmented and loosely defined, with literally dozens of independently connected associations throughout the state. Second, there is another group -- the 9-12 Project organization -- who share the core Tea Party philosophy, but their genesis emanates from syndicated television host Glenn Beck. So these grass roots activists, their organizations and

respective organizers are conservatives who want the same things but don't necessary follow any single leader or defined mantra.

While Pridemore's promotional material attempts to depict her as a Tea Party and 9-12 favorite, it appears that she will not likely garner a majority of either of those delegates' votes at the state convention in Macon.

"The Tea Party members I know are right now gravitating towards Hanley and Everhart," Dooley said. "When we asked Sue early on to keep our organizations separate from the state Party apparatus, she obliged. And Hanley has been very active with our veteran outreach programs."

Dooley maintains that Pridemore can't have it both ways. "You can't say you're a grassroots activist and an outsider and then align yourself with the governor and political power brokers," Dooley said. "Anytime we asked Sue and Shawn for anything they were right there."

Dooley conjectured that scores of her members might be turned off by what they consider a ploy by Deal to consolidate power through his surrogate, Pridemore. "We don't want more power centralized in the hands of one," Dooley asserted. "That very concept is counter to our core beliefs." Dooley claims that if a conflict comes up, there would be no hope for amicable independent resolution. "Pridemore will have no choice but to blindly follow the governor," Dooley proffered. "It's the grassroots who should run their Party, not the governor and his anointed choice."

Mary Adamsky, who succeeded Pridemore as Ga. state coordinator for the 9-12 Project, says her members have not settled on one candidate, either. "Our ten 9-12 groups throughout the state are all separate and unique," Adamsky said. "However we are looking for a fresh approach, new ideas, a bold vision and more transparency," the new state leader said. "Right now our supporters seem to have divided their support between Tricia and Shawn."

Rhonda Wilson, a Tea Party Activist from Johns Creek says she is undecided in the race. "Whoever the chair is, they are going to have to raise a lot of money for the 2012 elections," Wilson said.

Julianne Thompson, Georgia State Coordinator for Tea Party Patriots, who also serves on the Republican Party of Georgia's Executive Committee, said that there is definitely no Tea Party candidate. "Tea Party support is split at this point," Thompson said. "Tricia is definitely the choice of the Governor and some of the elected establishment, but not all," Thompson said.

A high level Tea Party organizer, who preferred anonymity for professional reasons, questioned some of Pridemore's campaign tactics. "Her direct mail flyers were deceptive, and some of her web ads and digital media promotional material are purposely misleading." The mailer in question featured Gov. Deal and Pridemore as a sort of state convention duet. "There are ads running on FaceBook for Tricia that say 'Join Governor Deal', and when you click on it, it takes you to her website. Then there is an email where the Governor makes a formal statement for the convention, and at the bottom it says, 'Paid for by Pridemore for Chairman.' I don't think that is upfront," the grassroots leader said.

Another Pridemore web ad had a promo for Herman Cain that lulled the viewer into thinking that Cain had endorsed her candidacy. But when contacted, a Cain spokesperson said that her boss had not formally endorsed anyone in the race. Edens Davis, one of Pridemore's campaign operatives, when contacted, said that the ad was simply a test by their digital vendor, and was not meant for publication. "We took the ad down as soon as we saw it," Davis said. "It was a technology test and not meant for publication."

When queried about Pridemore's ad campaign that uses the governor's name and picture, a spokesperson for Deal, Stephanie Mayfield said, "Tricia Pridemore has shown herself to be an excellent leader in the Georgia grassroots and the technology industry. She can certainly bring new ideas to the state party. The governor is not against any candidate, he is for Tricia."

Deal's communication director, Brian Robinson, said the governor endorsed Pridemore but was not, to his knowledge, actively campaigning on her behalf. "The governor knows Tricia, he's worked directly with her, and he thinks she'd be a fantastic Chairwoman. That's as far as it goes," Robinson said.

But Dooley disputed Robinson's account. "The Governor is calling people every day," she pronounced. "He has personally called people. Ask Ben Satterfield of Gwinnett. Deal had a conference call with his campaign

county chairs and asked them to support Tricia." Satterfield could not be reached by press time.

Another discrepancy for Pridemore involves her resume, where she claims she worked as a volunteer for the Guy Milner (R) for Governor Campaign in 1998. Voting records show that Pridemore voted in the Democrat primary and the Democrat run-off in 1998. Typically, if one volunteers in a campaign, they vote in their preferred candidate's primary. Moreover, when a traditional Republican or Democrat switches over and votes in the opposing Party's primary, it is likely to be remembered, as it tends to be a purposeful decision. (For example, this author and his wife, staunch Republicans, switched over and voted in the 2008 Democrat U.S. Senate primary and run-off for Vernon Jones, who is a personal friend). When questioned, Pridemore said she voted in the GOP primary and run-off, and surmised that the voting rolls were in error. But the Secretary of State's office said that was next to impossible. When contacted by phone, a spokesperson for Milner who was involved in all the former candidate's campaigns could not recall Pridemore's involvement.

Former D-4 Congressional candidate Liz Carter **[pictured below]**, a Hanley supporter from DeKalb County, says that the next state chairman has to be able to work closely with the governor. "I think Shawn and Tricia can do that. If Sue is re-elected, she'll make a good effort to work with the governor as well." Carter said Hanley helped in her recent race to build a Republican base of support for the long term, even though her race was seen as a long-shot. "Shawn is a visionary and long-term thinker," Carter emphasized.



GOP Fulton County long-time activist Vicki Willard endorsed Everhart. "Sue has been on the ground doing the hard work for years," Willard said. "She is the quintessential grassroots candidate." Willard said that Everhart's contact list runs deep. "Sue can pick up the phone and get the help she needs from Ellijay to Tifton," Willard said. "Why reinvent the wheel? Everhart created the wheel."

#### HANDEL ON PRIDEMORE: WHO 'DAT?

Another rather suspect claim from the Pridemore camp came in the form of an interview that ran in The Marietta Daily Journal, where the upstart candidate suggested she had an inside track to gain the endorsement of former GOP gubernatorial hopeful Karen Handel, who lost by a razor thin margin to Deal in an August run-off. "I met with Mrs. Handel ... and told her that in my opinion, for what it's worth, this is just little me, but I'd hate to see us go down this road [Party battle]," Pridemore was quoted as saying. The relative political newcomer, in an interview with this newspaper, said she coveted Handel's endorsement and that the two had met in the past and planned another get together soon.

But Handel flatly denied the validity of either rendezvous. "I never met with her," Handel said. "If the woman knocked on my front door on a Saturday afternoon, I wouldn't know who she was."

The former Secretary of State says they may have shook hands at a campaign event – "along with me shaking hands and exchanging introductory comments with hundreds of others...but inferring that we met to discuss the campaign is simply false. The two are not even close to the same thing," Handel said. "We have not met on the Chairman's race. In fact, neither she nor anyone associated with her campaign has requested a meeting, so to say that we are planning a get together is simply not true."



As a matter of record, Pridemore was a key Deal volunteer since the onset of the governor's campaign. "[Pridemore] conveyed that we met to discuss campaign positioning -- again, not true. We never had a meeting on any topic -- let alone my campaign strategy," Handel added.

Handel, who recently launched a new business consulting company, vowed to stay out of the race. "I have gone out of my way to stay out of the GOP chairman's race -- much to the chagrin of some. That's why I was particularly vexed to have been brought into this in such a misleading way," Handel lamented. "While I get why Ms. Pridemore would seek to endear herself to some of my campaign supporters...her statements convey a relationship to me and my campaign that just simply did not exist."

One Fulton County Republican Party stalwart close to Handel predicted that most of her core supporters would line up behind Everhart. "Sue has already picked up the support of Fulton County Commissioner Liz Hausmann (R-North Fulton), and there are more to come," the very well connected former Handel enthusiast predicted. "At the end of the day, they supported Karen for her vision, energy, determination, dedication and ideas. They bucked the 'good old boy network' -- which is what Deal's choice represents, only cloaked in a skirt. This will translate into a wave of support for Sue Everhart," the operative said.

Hausmann **[pictured left]** confirmed her Everhart endorsement. "Sue has worked hard, achieved undeniable results -- the best in the country. That's why I am supporting Sue Everhart for state party chair," Hausmann, one of only two Republicans on the Fulton County

Commission, said.



### EJ WEIGHS IN

But former state senator and top-tier gubernatorial contender Eric Johnson, who finished a close third to Deal in the July GOP primary, has a different take. Johnson, very well regarded by Tea Party faithful and a beloved figure to movement conservatives around the state, has recently endorsed Pridemore.

"I know and respect all three candidates," Johnson said. "Truthfully, Tricia was the one I knew the least. However, I was very impressed with her when we met."

Johnson says he threw his support to Pridemore for three key reasons.

"First, she started, ran, and grew a small business," Johnson said. "She's an entrepreneur that knows what small businesses face and what has to be done for them to fuel job growth," Johnson theorized. "Second, Tricia is in the technology business, which is a critical component of our party's growth strategy. Third, Tricia has a deep, legitimate and documented record of supporting and growing organizations from the grass roots up. That's what we need right now."



The one-time state senate president pro-tem added that it was time to infuse the state party with "new energy, new people, and new ideas. We are doing very well, and now is the time for us to do even better."

Johnson maintained that it was wrong to lift the Chairman's term limits. "I did not support changing the two term chairman limit at the last convention just for Sue. It was not the right thing to do."

But Everhart wasted no time in disputing Johnson's account. "Eric Johnson's statement that I had the rules changed at the 2009 GOP Convention so that I could have a third term is just not true," Everhart rebutted. "Until the 2009 State Convention, the Chairman, National Committee Man and National Committee Woman could have unlimited terms. I was not on the rules committee, nor was I at the Rules Committee meetings. I allow the committees to do their work. The rule was suggested by the rules committee to give each office three terms and passed by the convention. This means that you cannot ever serve over three terms. I didn't serve on the rules committee, nor did I have anything to do with it whatsoever. Implying that I did is just blatantly false." Everhart says she further verified her position with the General Counsel, the Parliamentarian and the Secretary. "The facts don't lie," Everhart asserted. "People do."

A longtime Republican and state convention veteran, who requested anonymity, collaborated Everhart's account. "My recollection is that the rules change, which had been discussed for some time, originally focused on term limits for the National Committeeman and Woman positions because people were concerned about Alec Poitevint continuing to be Committeeman for ongoing terms. At the time, there were no term limits for any position. The Committee was persuaded and decided to recommend a three-term limit for the RNC positions and the state chair. The convention unanimously approved both changes without any comment or argument on either."

**But** Ga. RNC National Committeewoman Linda Herren had a slightly different account.

"Alec Poitevint has served on the RNC since before 1988 - approximately six terms. At times he held two votes when he was National Committeeman and also State GOP Chairman," Herren said. "The GAGOP rules were changed in 2007 to preclude any one person from holding two votes on the RNC."



Herren **[pictured left]** maintained that prior to 2009 the GAGOP rules had no term limits stated for National Committeeman (NCM), National Committeewoman (NCW) or State Party Chairman. "The 2009 convention rules committee, acting on requests from their area activists, had a directive that no one person be allowed to hold a RNC position for over 20 years," Herren recalled. "This 2009 rules committee first considered limiting the terms of NCM and NCW to two term [eight years] and State Party Chairman to two terms [four years]. After much discussion they elected to limit these terms to three terms for NCM and NCW [12 years] and State Party Chairman [six years]."

Herren verified that she was asked by individual committee members what it would take to remove Mr. Poitevint from his long term RNC position. "I told them that Mr. Poitevint had already served over six terms and limiting this position to anything less than six terms would accomplish their objective," Herren said.

Johnson's take on Deal's involvement in the race differed from many of the activists who backed Johnson's own gubernatorial bid. "Everybody is painting this as a 'grassroots activists vs. the governor' election," Johnson offered. "But in reality, Tricia comes from the grassroots. I have no problem with the governor endorsing his preferred candidate for the state chair. As governor, Nathan Deal should get the benefit of the doubt when choosing someone to lead the state party that he represents. Certainly his choice should not be rubber-stamped -- and ultimately the grassroots should choose our next Party chairman -- but it makes sense for us to show deference to the governor. Delegates to our state convention should have valid reasons not to support the governor's choice in lieu of not supporting the candidate just because she happens to be the governor's choice. So I believe the argument is potentially being framed in reverse by some."

Johnson also called for the two party leaders to be on the same page. "Ultimately I want our Party's senior leadership and our governor to be on the same wave length," the Savannah-based architect and part-time lobbyist said.

"That is how we get the most done. If the party chair and the governor are at odds, what purpose does that serve? What does that accomplish? We need to raise money and build the party. This is the best way to get it done."

Liking it to the U.S. President, Johnson affirmed that the nation's chief executive chooses his or her own party chairman, so why shouldn't the governor? "The President is shown deference to their choice to lead the party, as the governor should. Then the burden of proof to counter the choice should be with the opposition, not the other way around," Johnson concluded.

### CONVENTION ANALYSIS

Predicting the outcome of a statewide chairman's race is close to impossible. The winning candidate is dependent on getting their delegates out to the mass meetings, the county conventions and finally to Macon. Many delegates have family or work issues that arise which get in the way of their Macon jaunt, leaving it to the alternates who take their place. However, here is what we do know.

Everhart has the most rank and file supporters who have been there, done that. They know how the game is played and they know the ropes. Plus her support is rabid. Her base will show up in Macon come hell or high water -- regardless if they have to take caravans, buses, trains, cabs or scooters. Everhart is also going to pick up the base Handel backers, who don't like Deal -- many still feel the sting of their hairline defeat at the hands of Deal -- and they will go to their grave believing the governor hid his financial woes until the run-off was over. These factors make Everhart the favorite going in.

Pridemore is going to rally a lot of new people to her side. Couple that with the governor's hands on campaigning for her, encouraging his friends, cajoling his associates, and even a little old-fashioned political arm-twisting and Pridemore is right in the thick of it. Her risk lies squarely with the number of Tea Party faithful who will show up. And they came out to the GOP district mass meetings on Saturday in force across the state. They are clearly on a collision course with Deal, and most are determined to shut down what they perceive as his blatant power grab. Their enemy is Pridemore.

Hanley is the wild card in the race. Although he is coming to Macon with a divided Fulton County, he has rallied significant support in non-metro counties, and his supporters turned out in huge numbers this past weekend. He vows to bring upwards of 500 new delegates to Macon, and we don't doubt him for a New York minute. Shawn Hanley is not to be underestimated. We witnessed his prowess first hand at the Fulton County Convention in 2007 where he upended an entrenched old guard incumbent, Mike Dvorsak, by bringing in over 70 new delegates to Riverside High School on a Saturday morning.

### THE RULES WILL TELL THE STORY

The convention election rules are not mandated by the Party's by-laws. Instead they are set by the convention rules committee, and released the day of the event. There are two key issues at stake: plurality vs. majority and secret vs. open ballot.

The convention rules committee is selected by and serves at the pleasure of the current chairman so suffice that it will be stacked with Everhart supporters. The committee will likely choose to elect the new chairman with a simple plurality in a secret ballot -- both of which favor Everhart. The incumbent is likely to get the most delegates to show up, but will assuredly be short of a 50 percent plus one majority out of the approximately 2,200 delegates who are expected to attend. Everhart wants a secret ballot -- an open ballot favors Pridemore -- as some delegates may be intimidated to publicly vote against the governor's wishes.

However, any delegate is allowed to challenge the rules from the floor. So the plurality rule will be challenged in favor of a majority electoral process. Once the amendment is seconded from the floor,

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all the delegates can vote on it. If the measure is defeated, that means Everhart has over half of the delegates in attendance and the race is over; Everhart wins. But if it carries, it will force a second ballot. This is where it gets dicey, and the outcome will be determined by the second place finisher.

If Everhart comes in first and Hanley comes in second, it is doubtful that many of Pridemore's troops will switch to Everhart. This is the best scenario for a Hanley victory. If it's Everhart first, Hanley second, the former Marine will become chairman. You can book that one, and mail it in. The irony of this scenario positions Hanley as the compromise candidate. For those who know Hanley, he'd normally be the last man on earth to be the compromise choice for anything. But that's what makes politics so unpredictable.

If Pridemore comes in second to Everhart, all bets are off. Hanley supporters will likely split down the middle, and it's anyone's guess which of the two will win on the second ballot.

When asked which set of convention rules she'd support, the veteran Chairwoman answered in vintage Everhart candor: "Whatever rules get me to come in first," she quipped, "are whatever rules I'm for."