

Columbus mayoral race offers firsts

COLUMBUS, Ohio (AP) — Next month's mayoral race is drawing unusual attention — and not just because it will give the nation's 15th-largest city its first black or first female mayor.

The fact that there's a real race at all is news in Columbus, a city where Republicans have held the office since 1971.

If Democrat Michael Coleman wins the Nov. 2 election, his party could control the government of a capital city where Republicans hold all statewide nonjudicial offices. Democrats already have six of seven seats on the City Council and are likely to keep a majority with four seats up for election.

Coleman, 44, the City Council president, and Republican Dorothy Teater, 68, a Franklin County commissioner, emerged as the top two finishers in the May 5 nonpartisan primary.

Registered Democrats outnumber Republicans in

Columbus, but thanks to a large number of independent voters, the Democrats have come close only once in the past 16 years to winning the mayor's office.

Coleman, however, is given a good shot. A mail poll conducted by The Columbus Dispatch from Sept. 24-Oct. 1 found that 47 percent of the respondents favored Coleman and 40 percent supported Teater, with 13 percent undecided. The random sample of 2,649 registered city voters had a margin of sampling error of plus or minus 2 percentage points.

The closeness of the race, and a general lack of high-profile races in Ohio and across the nation, led the state and national political parties to make the campaign a priority.

Republican National Committee Chairman Jim Nicholson appeared at a fundraiser for Teater in September, while Democratic National Chairman Joe Andrew has

been in town twice for Coleman.

Each candidate expects to spend at least \$1 million, the bulk of it for advertising down the stretch.

Teater's television advertising has been typical of candidates playing catch-up late in the race: Focus on the opponent and make it negative.

The first ad criticized Coleman for voting to give pay raises to Police Chief James Jackson, who has been criticized and suspended by Mayor Greg Lashutka, but has civil service protection.

Under Jackson, too many officers are behind desks and not on the streets, and the community is fed up with slow response times to crimes, Teater said. Coleman isn't crazy about Jackson either, but he said the mayor has no choice but to coexist with the chief.

"It's very important to keep politics out of the Division of Police," Coleman said last week.

One of the few other issues

sharply dividing the candidates is a plan to use property tax generated by a planned suburban mall to finance road work and other improvements for that area. Teater supports a ballot issue to repeal what she considers a tax break for a wealthy developer that would devastate an older mall closer to the center of Columbus. Coleman says the city must keep its promise on the tax deal.

But Teater said it may not be the issues themselves the city's 670,000 residents will remember most about the campaign.

"The big thing is the diversity issue, a black man against a white woman. There's never been a woman run before," Teater said.

Before they got into politics, Coleman was a lawyer and Teater was a teacher in high school, college and adult education. She worked in consumer affairs for a bank and the city, and did not run for office until her four sons were grown.

NAACP: NRA stereotyping, finger-pointing

Special to Sentinel-Voice
National Association for the Advancement of Colored People President Kweisi Mfume blasted the National Rifle Association for what it calls Willie-Horton-like commercials opposing gun control legislation.

Horton, an African-American, was convicted for assaulting an elderly White woman.

Former President George Bush used commercials depicting Horton's crime to demonstrate his tough-on-crime stance. Bush used the

media to lambaste Democratic candidate as soft on crime, pointing to the former Massachusetts governor's record of paroling of prisoners in that state.

The media campaign worked and Dukakis was trounced in the 1988 presidential campaign.

"When it comes to pushing guns, the National Rifle Association cannot stoop low enough," Mfume said. "When most of America calls for responsible gun control, the NRA gives us another Willie-Horton-like public

relations campaign."

"We (NAACP) will not stand silent while the NRA tries to make America believe that most people arrested for gun-related crimes are African-Americans and other ethnic minorities," Mfume said.

The civil rights organization has filed a federal lawsuit to force gun manufacturers to change the way guns are sold and marketed. The lawsuit is not seeking monetary rewards.

If successful, the lawsuit would force gun distributors

to sell only to dealers with store fronts, limit handgun sales to one per month, bar distributors from selling guns to individuals or dealers who sell at gun shows and insist manufactures inspect quarterly distributors and firearm retailers.

"While NRA plays on our worse fears and racial stereotypes, young people are dying on our streets and children who found the family handgun are dying in too many homes," Mfume said. "It's time to put a stop to the killing."

Bombshell

(Continued from Page 1)
city employees is that it may not be the way to go ... (Goodman) felt strongly that the opinion would make this a non-issue one way or the other," said Brown, who will see a portion of his Ward 4 carved out to make room for Ward 6. "Candidly it came as a surprise. Certainly I don't think anyone saw it coming.

"I still stand by my comments that I'd like to see the most qualified candidates appointed to these seats."

All of the council members said they were prepared to place their votes on Wednesday, but only McDonald and Reese agreed to go on record with their choices — Weekly and Sanchez.

"I was prepared to vote today," Boggs McDonald said. "I didn't want to make a rash vote; I wanted clarification. ... It's worthy of an investigation, as far as holding this in abeyance. I've said all along I want to appoint someone who will fit in."

Weekly's leading opposition for the Ward 5 seat is Uri Clinton, while Sanchez's top contender is local businessman Michael Mack.

"This is politics, this is the name of the game," Weekly said. "I don't have a problem with the abeyance, the council just needed to work out the logistics. Those who are selected won't have to worry about the ethics commission, they can just move on."

Said Clinton: "Sometimes you don't find out about regulations until you're about to vote; and that's what we saw today."

Sanchez said he slept for about an hour the night before the meeting, and estimates he'll have plenty more restless nights before the process of selecting new council members is over.

"It's going to be tough, but I have a lot of support and think I'll get a lot more," Sanchez said. "I respect what Mayor Goodman did. Thirty days is a long time, but that was his job."

Mack, who in the past two weeks has traded the favorite role with Sanchez a couple of times, said the decision came as a complete shock.

In fact, he said he thought he had lost some votes by the start of Wednesday's meeting.

"I didn't know where the votes were," Mack said. "A cohesive council makes for better government," That doesn't mean they have to agree on everything, but there is definitely some games being played."

Said McDonald: "It's what the majority of the board decided and that's how we work — together as a majority. On this issue, bottom line, we have two of the best qualified neighborhood advocates to appoint to these seats.

"Once we have a ruling from the ethics board, we can move forward."

Court to clarify criminal appeals

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Supreme Court agreed on Monday to use a California case to clarify when criminal defendants can appeal a judge's decision to let jurors hear about their prior criminal convictions.

The court said it will hear a woman's argument in a drug case that she should be allowed to appeal such a ruling, even though she told jurors from the witness stand about the earlier conviction.

Maria Suzuki Ohler was stopped by customs agents when she tried to enter the United States from Mexico at San Ysidro, Calif., in July 1997.

An agent noticed an interior panel of her van had been tampered with, and a search found more than 80 pounds of marijuana.

Prosecutors sought permission to introduce evidence of her 1993 felony conviction for possession of methamphetamine.

Before the trial began, the judge ruled such evidence could be used to attack Ohler's credibility if she testified.

Ohler took the stand and during her testimony told jurors of the earlier conviction.

The jury convicted her on charges of importing marijuana and possessing the drug with intent to distribute. She was sentenced to 30 months in prison.

She appealed, arguing the judge should not have ruled her prior conviction could be used against her.

The 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals upheld her conviction and said she waived that argument by mentioning the conviction in her own testimony.

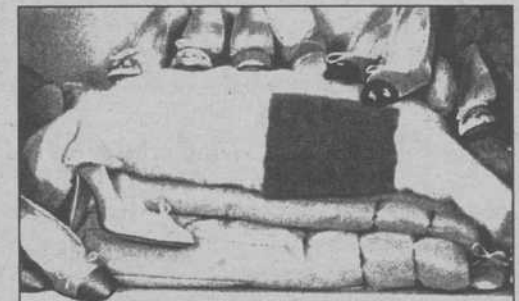
In the appeal granted review Monday, Ohler's lawyers said she admitted the prior conviction in an effort "to remove the sting of the imminent cross-examination."

"The admission of a defendant's prior conviction is one of the most deadly weapons in a prosecutor's arsenal," her lawyers said.

They added that federal appeals courts have split over whether a defendant's testimony about a prior conviction waives the right to argue on appeal that the conviction should not have been used as evidence.

Justice Department lawyers said the 9th Circuit court ruling means defendants must choose between preserving the right to appeal that issue or "attempting to soften the blow of damaging info by introducing it on direct examination."

The case is Ohler vs. U.S., 99-9828.



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