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Speculating rampant on filling state positions

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A new governor has yet to be elected, but names for jobs are being batted around among Democrats. Deval L. Patrick says it's all 'very premature.' Kerry Healey warns about Beacon Hill's old-boy network.

By Andrea Estes, Globe Staff | November 1, 2006

The voters have not yet spoken. But gubernatorial candidate Deval L. Patrick, leading in the polls, is being besieged by job seekers looking for a position in a new, Democratic administration, the first in 16 years.

Some have their heart set on a spot on the transition team. Others want specific jobs when the new governor takes office in January. Yet others seem content just to have their names mentioned.

"The line is already forming, to tell you the truth, and I've told people it's very premature to start down that path," Patrick told the Associated Press last week.

Patrick and his campaign insist that they are focused on Tuesday's election. But some State House insiders and Democratic activists name a number of people, including some who served in the Dukakis administration, who may be eager to return to public life.

Among the names that have surfaced are former state representative and healthcare activist John McDonough, former Dukakis aide and environmental consultant John DeVillars, former Dukakis aide and economic development consultant Alden Raine, and former state representative Suzanne Bump, who has played a key role in the Patrick campaign. Also mentioned are former state senator Cheryl Jacques, who has also been helping with the campaign, former state Division of Conservation and Recreation commissioner Kathy Abbott, and Jim Gomes, president of the Environmental League of Massachusetts.

The behind-the-scenes maneuvering has become fodder for Kerry Healey, who has seized on the starry-eyed hopes of Democrats to portray Patrick as a friend of the Beacon Hill old-boy network.

"We are focused on Nov. 7. Deval Patrick is already thinking about Nov. 8," Healey told volunteers at her West Roxbury campaign office Saturday. "They're lining up now, and Deval Patrick is admitting it. . . . The buzz inside the State House is tremendous. Everyone can't wait until they can get into office again, all the special interests, and they can spend the taxpayers' money."

Those whose names have been mentioned are coy, saying all they care about is a win Tuesday.

"Between now and next Tuesday everyone ought to be focused on the election, rather than what happens afterwards," Gomes said.

"But it certainly is an honor to be mentioned. I think it's really premature to talk about it before election day."

Jacques, who served as a state senator for nearly 12 years and who now lives in the Washington, D.C., area, said: "My only goal is to get this man elected."

She said she has been working on the campaign since before the primary. "He served on the board of an airline that was the first in the country to offer domestic partnership benefits across the nation to all employees," said Jacques, referring to United Airlines. "It was a resounding badge of honor that Deval was part of that effort."

Several lawmakers and staff members have also been mentioned as possible Patrick appointees, including Senator Brian A. Joyce, Patrick's Milton neighbor; Senator Jarrett T. Barrios of Cambridge; Senator Richard T.

Moore of Uxbridge; and Senator Steven A. Baddour of Methuen. Moore told the Globe he isn't interested.

Former US attorney Donald Stern and former attorney general Scott Harshbarger have also surfaced as possible advisers in a Patrick administration.

Both defeated Democratic candidates for lieutenant governor, Deborah Goldberg and Andrea Silbert, said they would like to work for Patrick. "I ran for lieutenant governor because I'm extremely committed to helping get this state moving, getting it back to where we're doing things we could be doing," Goldberg said. "If there is any way in which I can be helpful and involved, I'd obviously be ready, willing, and able to do that."

Silbert said she would be interested in working on "issues that concern me, around jobs and economic development," but stressed that she's focusing on "making sure Deval wins."

"We've all seen how quickly polls can change," she said. "I'm doing everything I can . . . splitting my time between the Patrick-Murray campaign and my family."

But some analysts say that despite the pent-up Democratic demand for government jobs, Patrick might not have an easy time filling key slots if he wins office.

He has repeatedly pledged to bring in outsiders.

"I think he will find it much more difficult to attract people than he thinks," said Lawrence DiCara, a lawyer who is a former Boston city councilor. "The pay scales are very low. The conflict-of-interest laws are very strict. He's also going to find there isn't much of a bench out there. I'm not sure Dukakis people are in a position financially or psychologically to take some of those jobs. I think he'll be looking at a whole new slate of people."

State Senator Michael W. Morrissey of Quincy said Democrats are relishing the prospect of a Democrat occupying the governor's office after 16 years of Republican rule. "But you never discuss who's going to go to work until you win the race," he said. ■