

The future of the Monmouth County Democratic Party?



Long Branch's Vin Gopal

LONG BRANCH – At the triCityNews, our job is to spot a trend or story before anyone else. Especially when it comes to politics.

Thus our focus this week on twenty-six year-old Vin Gopal of Long Branch. Because this guy may be the future of the Monmouth County Democratic Party. You heard it here first.

At only 23, Gopal started a biweekly newspaper in Red Bank called the Monitor. He's grown that into a publishing group with two magazines and a newspaper based in Northern Monmouth. And that's in the middle of a recession.

So, yes, Vin Gopal is a Publisher and newspaper owner. He's also a Democratic candidate for the state Assembly in the 11th District.

Hmmm, a newspaper Publisher and an Assembly candidate. What's not to like?

(Gopal is running for one of the two 11th District Assembly seats. His Democratic running mate is Asbury Park restaurateur Marilyn Schlossbach. The two Republicans are incumbent Assemblywomen Caroline Casagrande and Mary Pat Angelini. There's also an Independent in the race.)

Anyway, we focus on Gopal this week because we see him as potentially a future Chairman of the Monmouth County Democratic Party.

As for the Assembly race, our assessment – and Gopal vigorously disputes it – is that the Republicans will win the election. Most likely by a comfortable margin. Sure, anything can happen. But the odds are strongly against all the challengers in the 11th District contest.

But the Assembly race is important for Gopal's future because it further establishes him in Monmouth County Democratic politics. He's a relentless campaigner and fundraiser. Everyone we know who comes across the guy views him as a comer because of his intelligence and earnestness.

Take former triCity conservative columnist Tommy DeSeno, who blogs for high profile conservative media outlets like FoxNews.com. He also posts local material on the More Monmouth Musings website run by powerful GOP blogger Art Gallagher.

DeSeno recently met Gopal at an Asbury Park event and was impressed. Here's what he posted on Gallagher's site:

I ended up meeting a very likable fellow. Vin's physical demeanor is comfortable. He sat in his chair sort of laid back and to the side rather than stiffly composed. He wasn't trying to dominate the people around him. His conversational tone was just that. There were no contrived candidate sound bites. No "handlers" trying to keep our conversation brief. Although I'm sure he was "working the room" as candidates do, he did so in a way that made it seem he belonged in the room - that he was one of the

gang. A real natural...

Gopal's Democratic credentials are solid, despite impressing our local Rush Limbaugh. He got his start in politics working in the campaign of Democratic Congressman Dennis Kucinich. He also worked in the press office for Senator Edward Kennedy.

Vin shows a diplomatic streak beyond his years when asked about taking over the Monmouth County Democratic Party when long-time Chairman Victor V. Scudieri eventually retires. That's where we always saw Gopal heading, although he could still do it if he won the Assembly seat.

"I love Vic Scudieri. I support Vic as long as he's there," Gopal said. "I think it would be disrespectful to even talk about the Chairmanship while he's there."

"I think Vic is one of the most generous people I've ever met," he added.

We know that Gopal is very close to Scudieri. Scudieri is even Gopal's landlord up in Hazlet where Vin employs 16 people. That relationship should serve him well when the Chairmanship opens up.

"I'm a passionate Democrat," said Gopal. "I like where the party comes from. I think there are certain social programs that we should have. I'm not for giving handouts, but I think people should have a level playing field. Government has a responsibility to even the playing field."

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