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Upstate split benefits Brady in gubernatorial race

By Tom Kacich

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These are the best of times for Republican gubernatorial candidate Bill Brady of Bloomington.

In what is now, unofficially, a seven-way race for the GOP nomination, one thing sets Brady apart: He is the only one of the candidates from south of Interstate 80. In fact, he's the only one of the seven white male Republican hopefuls not from Cook or DuPage counties.

Brady lives about 120 miles southwest of the rest of the Republican candidates, who live about 20 miles apart from each other: Adam Andrzejewski and Kirk Dillard in Hinsdale; Andy McKenna in Chicago; Jim Ryan in Elmhurst; Dan Proft in Chicago; and Bob Schillerstrom in Naperville.

If that scenario were to remain in place for the next three months, Brady, a two-term state senator, would have a nice advantage in the Feb. 2 gubernatorial primary. While the six other candidates would fight over the Republican vote in the Chicago area – and presumably split it – Brady could have the 90 or so downstate counties mostly to himself.

"If they do all jump into the race it really solidifies it for Brady," said Jerry Clarke, chief of staff for U.S. Rep. Tim Johnson, R-Urbana, who also is the 15th Congressional District Republican state central committeeman. Both Clarke and Johnson are backing Brady for governor.

"For Brady, this is all a benefit because he'd like to see the others fight it out," said Chris Mooney, a political scientist at the University of Illinois at Springfield.

Here's one way to look at it: The five-county Chicago metropolitan area provided about 58 percent of the vote in the last two GOP gubernatorial primaries. If there are a million Republican votes in the 2010 primary – a reasonable expectation, given that there were 917,828 Republican voters statewide in 2002, and that a GOP resurgence is expected next year – that means about 580,000 votes would come from the Chicago area. Assume that the winner in that area gets 25 percent of the vote, giving him 145,000 votes. That's only 10,000 more votes than the 135,370 that Brady collected four years ago, when he finished third in a five-way race for governor.

Clarke and other local Republicans insist that Brady is a much stronger candidate this time.

"He's working a lot harder this time than I've seen him work before," Clarke said. "He is definitely the front-runner."

Maybe. Two recently released polls – done by potential Brady foes – dispute that notion. But a survey of 201 Republican respondents by the Paul Simon Public Policy Institute at Southern Illinois University said that Brady got 10 percent of the vote to 7.5 percent for Dillard. But the leading vote-getter was "Don't know/no answer" with 55.7 percent.

None of the numbers mean much, said one Republican strategist, given that the polls are essentially measuring just name identification. Radio and television advertising, which moves polling numbers more than anything, hasn't begun yet.

Plus, it's likely that one or more of the Chicago area candidates will drop out before Nov. 2, the deadline to file candidacy petitions.

"It's like the Oklahoma land rush when the first ones got the best land," said Roosevelt University political scientist Paul Green, "except this is for the best money. There's just not enough money for all of them to stay in the race."

"The fact that there are seven candidates now means that no one has been able to clear the field," said Kent Redfield, another University of Illinois at Springfield political scientist. "But in the cold light of day they're going to look at what it costs to do media buys and someone is going to drop out."

Finally, it remains to be seen if Brady can expand his political base beyond central Illinois. Four years ago he won 22 Illinois counties, almost all of them in the central band of the state. That was even though he was the only downstater in the race. Those 22 counties provided just 105,662 votes to all the Republican candidates – fewer than the 135,461 in Cook County

alone.

The best scenario for Brady is for all the DuPage County candidates – Schillerstrom, Ryan, Dillard and Andrzejewski – to remain in the race. The worst would be a narrowed-down race that included just Dillard, Proft and Andrzejewski. DuPage County is expected to produce a big GOP turnout in February – probably bigger than the 125,000 votes in 2002 – because of a heated Republican primary for county board president.

For now the race is up for grabs. But two things will shake it out: the first candidate(s) to drop out of the race and whenever the first contender goes on TV or radio. That's when the real race begins.

Bradfield finally files

Rex Bradfield, who ran as a Republican for mayor of Urbana last April, finally filed his long-overdue campaign disclosure report last Wednesday. It was due July 20.

The report showed that Bradfield's campaign was entirely self-funded, and that he spent \$26,932.

Given that he received 1,578 votes (to 2,643 for Democrat Laurel Prussing), it means that Bradfield spent \$17.07 for each vote he received. Prussing spent \$6.26 per vote.

Bradfield's debt from two unsuccessful political campaigns for state representative and mayor of Urbana totals \$41,657.

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