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STATE and LOCAL POLITICS
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MODULE NO. 1
Essay (a)

QUALITIES OF CHARACTER

To make it to the highest office in any state you must display personal character reflected in a wide range of aspects. If you look at the current array of seated Governors across our great nation you will see very different men and women with varied backgrounds and qualifications. The broad range from hardline conservative Republicans like Idaho's Larry Otter (who will we talk about more later) to liberal Democrats like Massachusetts's Deval Patrick, reflect different geographical political climates as well as political trends existing, beginning, or ending. Current events, pressing issues, and predecessor's follies, triumphs, or placid status quo, work their way squarely into the mix.

The first requirement of a candidate for Governor is that he has some successful track record to rely on. Running for any state's high office is a venture in selling one's self, and you have to come into the deal with a salable bill of goods. In our fine state, a vast expanse of Democratic entrenchment, we elected a Republican conservative (there exist some who would argue with that categorization) with a Mormon belief system. When's the last time you met a Mormon who lived in Massachusetts? It happens, but so do double lightning strikes. Mr. Romney came along at a time when Massachusetts had been stuck in the status quo administrations of ^{Bill} Phil Weld, Paul Celluci, and Jane Swift, and even though they too were all ^RRepublicans, the state was not quite ready to give the then array of democratic candidates a shot. It is clear the constituency saw the list of ^DDemocrats and local Republicans

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- as cookie cutter versions of what we had been stuck with for the past decade plus and were ready for a change.

Mitt Romney came in with a brilliant success in his resurrection of the scandal plagued Salt Lake City Olympics, and seemed to have a squeaky clean moral record, with an almost idealic family life. The mud digging press in the Boston area did all within their power to find some dirt on fair haired Mitt, but it was clear he was a man of morals, not just talking the moral talk but truly walking the moral walk, and with his impressive track record the voters gave him the nod. The importance of the Romney example is that you don't need strong moral ties to the community, nor do you have to be part of the popular geographic religious make-up. If you come along at the right time, have a strong platform from which to swing your bat, and can get the monetary support you need (an aspect Romney had "built in"), then the atypical candidate can prevail.

Any gubernatorial candidate must have a full and strong grasp of the needs of the State. This is accomplished in different ways. Many candidates are current or former public servants of the State and come into the running with a base understanding of the pressing issues and dark horses of the day. Other candidates surround themselves with advisors who they feel can best provide them with the information they need to sell their plans for addressing needs and resolving problems. Meeting with constituents offers a view as to where the hearts of the people are at. Political Action Committees can afford direction on where the power dollars are at. The candidate must keep a nose to the wind as far as what is pushing the common man to get involved. Balancing the budget, taxes, infrastructure, the environment, commerce, and all the area specific issues have to be addressed in well thought out plans of attack. Mass media today gets the ideas out quickly and political opponents will tear up any that fall short of the mark.

Each State has it's on Constitution and Bill of Rights. A candidate must be well schooled in how that Constitution was shaped in the areas of personal protections, oversight, and individual rights. This shows how that State lives and breaths, and a concerned Governor must protect -

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- that life's breath in order to keep the State functionally alive. The individual Constitutions also give a deep read into how the state was shaped and what the constituency's value system is. If a candidate can accurately see where the State came from he can do a better job of guiding that State where it needs to go. It may take some oratory prowess to convey this message to the masses, but if it can be done it is a valuable tool toward success.

Constituents will often times overlook the transgressions of a candidate if they think he is a "man of the people". I think old Huey Long is a time-tested example of such. He stood in the fields of the farms, in the parking lots of the factories, on the bridge at the Mills, and anywhere he could reach the common man to sell his "chicken in every pot" campaign. He made it to the big office, got caught in quite a few political scandals (they said he never met a bribe he didn't like), but the people overlooked it all as they felt him one of their own. In today's climate things can be a little less forgiving, but if the folly is not too damaging a candidate may have support in spite of problems.

Idaho Senator Larry Craig's recent trouble is a good example of how one's party can ~~abandon~~ them if the transgression is too great. The Governor in Idaho, Larry Otter, was no where to be found when it was alledged that Craig had solicited gay sex in a bathroom, and in fact had plead guilty to related charges. Too much of an albatross to shed. The two hardliners were vocal opponents of gay rights, and Craig even sponsored anti-gay bills, but Otter had to leave his pal by the curbside when this scandal broke. You've got to keep your street clean, but most of all you have to be sincere in your beliefs. Transgressions like this cut deep.

State's are plagued with certain problems that candidates must offer solutions to in order to get elected. New York state was experiencing a drug epidemic with the emergence of crack cocaine in the early 1980's. Rockefeller came up with his extreme drug conviction sentencing laws as a deterrent. Men and women were being sent to prison for decades for drug convictions, and the populas -

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- seemed pleased, but who knew that the long lasting social ramifications these laws had on families, race, and the drug problem itself would play out down the road. Governor Sargent in Massachusetts came along at a time when the State was ready for a hard working captain to take the helm. He worked hard to address the complicated problems of the era such as the Brown v. Board of Education forced busing debacle, which saw this state at potential riot high racial tensions, and did what he thought was right to honor the new law of the land.

Massachusetts was also a very environmentally orientated state, something that dated back to the state's inception, and Governor Sargent was a pioneering environmentalist. This state was founded on the back of the cod fish, and the rights of the men, and ever increasing amounts of women, who made their living from the land was well represented by Governor Sargent. He knew the importance of protecting open spaces, but also had a great knack for promoting business and allowing development to prosper. A tough act to balance and Sargent's example needs to be taught.

Many politicians are lawyers. A barrister's mind gives one a sense for the law, but it does not ensure that economic development and assured growth are strong suits. How laws are proposed and presented can be a large part of a Governor's duty, and it is certain that a strong legal background will aid in this process. The citizens have their method in initiating legislation through the vehicle of constitutional initiative, but the Governor has to be able to sell his ideas to the legislature through his risk/gain - need/value proposal. You need a vast legislative majority to amend the state constitution, and any Governor who has strong intentions in that area had better do his homework and be able to shed bipartisanship. Good for good's sake can meet the test, but sometimes what's good for the public in general may not seem good to the power brokers in the legislature. The Governor needs a talent for negotiation and compromise, as well as a passion for what he is bringing to the table. He must believe in order to get others to believe and jump on board. You can't avoid the one-

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- hand-washes-the-other bargaining of government, but that type of operating method is not always bad. You can go to those who you have supported in the past for support, and trustworthy long term relationships are built that way. Politics is politics, but it does not have to be arm twisting and elephant memory vendettas, it can be a cooperative effort with many points of view and needs being represented. In fact it has to be such, and to effectuate such you need a skilled leader who has the strength of character to get the job done, backed up by the trust of the masses in his ability to do what is right and required.

The most effective way to communicate ones competency to his constituents is to stand up and prove that you know what you are talking about. This is done by presenting educated and clear points on the issue being addressed, while proposing what it is you plan to do. You lay out what you will do, back it up with an analysis of the reasoning, and then back up your words with action. Swift and decisive. For this to be all that it needs to be you must do what you say. You must display your reliability. If an error is made the Governor must promptly admit it and get out from under it's burden right away. Humanity understands error, but resents arrogance in pretending to be unflawed and always right. When you show that you have the best interests of the state at heart, have done what it takes to come up with the best plan, and have done all within your power to carry out that plan with integrity and honesty, you then have a very powerful platform from which to operate. Actions speak louder than words.

The opposite can also prove true. If you drop the ball in handling an important issue, get caught playing to the special interests who have conflicting values than that of the state, or if you commit some personal folly, then it may be difficult to get the support, from the legislature and constituency, that you need. Foes love to beat a dead horse, supporters can look for a new wagon to hitch their horse to, and a Governor must do all he/she can to avoid falling into -

- this type of trap or pitfall. It happens, probably more than it should, but it can be political suicide not to understand the true duties of one's office and play to the big money boys.

Today we have vast issues with education. The youth of our country must be seen as a valuable resource. A strong leader makes education a top priority and tries his/her best to bring the class separations in education closer together. Educating the children of those on the lower end of the economic scale solves many of the social ills that plague that population and eases the burden on the wallet of the taxpayer as far as social costs are concerned. You can't be penny wise and pound foolish. Band aid fix-its don't work, and cause costs down the road, and any Governor must put the budget in balance, as is his constitutional duty, but he can't sell education short. No investment in the future of the state can be as important as the investment in that state's children.

The voice of the people has to be heard. Economic growth needs to be balanced with the right to enjoy the vast resources that business would like to engulf. Public needs must outweigh corporate expense. Small business must be viewed as just as important as any major corporation, maybe more important. The working middle class is the backbone of any state, and the Governor must pay this proper heed. The Governor works for the people, and the people will ultimately decide his/her long term fate.

Integrity, honesty, fortitude, and education are most important in a governor. Sure it helps to look like Mitt Romney, or have the charisma of a Ronald Reagan or Arnold Swarzenegger, but ultimately it will be what the Governor does as opposed to how he looks or sells his/herself in how long they stick around or what their individual legacy will be. Great speakers, sharp dressers, and pretty boys or girls get found out quick if they lack the wherewithal to do the job, fight the hard fight, and make the tough decisions. Great governorship comes from within. It is a product of hard work and desire. A lackluster rule can be produced when the motives are askew. It's not hard to see. It's also not hard to see when a man or women has done their level -

- best to be all they can be. There is no substitute for integrity. There is no replacement for honesty. Nothing doubles for fortitude. To know what your doing, to make plans that succeed, you have to educate yourself about the needs of the state. When you couple that education with the listed attributes you have what it takes to be a strong and effective Governor in today's political climate.

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Good work for your first paper I like your current examples 24/25 points