

## Local political talk turns to possible replacements for Blaum's seat

By James Conmy  
Staff Writer

As news started to leak out over the weekend that long-time state Rep. Kevin Blaum would not seek re-election, rumors began to swirl about potential successors.

"I expect they'll be no shortage of candidates," local political advisor Ed Mitchell said Sunday. "We'll hear speculation in the next couple of days."

Mitchell believes the heavily Democratic 121st Legislative District will not change hands, despite the 26-year incum-



Kane



Vinsko

bent's decision to step aside.

"The Republicans are going to have a candidate, but in my opinion, whoever wins the Democratic (May 2006) primary will be the next representative."

Wilkes-Barre Councilwoman Kathy Kane and city Solicitor Bill Vinsko confirmed interest

in the seat. Both are Democrats. "I'm going to do a lot of soul-searching," Kane said. "It's always something I've thought about. It's definitely an option."

Kane credited Blaum for all of his accomplishments in his 13 terms. It is surprising he decided not to run, she said.

If Vinsko enters the race, it will be his first attempt at public office.

"Kevin is a great guy and he continues to do a good job," Vinsko said Sunday. "I think that we should focus on his great accomplishments at this time and reflect on the terrific job he has done. I will not rule

it out, but this is Kevin's day, not mine."

One candidate who will definitely enter the race is Republican Christine Katsock, who lost to Blaum in 2004. The incumbent's decision to step aside did not affect her decision, but she believes it strengthens her chances.

"I was going to run anyway," Katsock said Sunday. "The people of this district are familiar with me and my platform from when I ran last time. I'll probably formally announce after the first of the year."

Luzerne County Commissioner Stephen Urban does not

agree with Mitchell's opinion that Republicans will have little chance to win the seat.

"I think it's a good chance for the Republicans to take over this seat," Urban said. "People are voting for a person more than they are a party."

Whoever wins the race will have tough shoes to fill, Mitchell said.

"This is a very important seat to the area," Mitchell said. "We need someone young and resourceful enough that can spend the time to rebuild (Blaum's) seniority."

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