

Another Philadelphia governor? Rendell can only do better

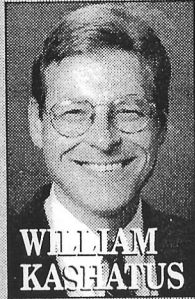
Ed Rendell's position as chairman of the Democratic National Committee will allow him time to restock his campaign chest and generate the exposure he needs for a gubernatorial bid in 2002.

Even now, Rendell has to be considered a serious candidate for governor because of his remarkable ability to stare down unions, eliminate waste and inefficiency, balance a budget, and attract a tourist industry.

Those achievements promise to make him a more effective governor than other Philadelphians who have served in that office since the turn of the 19th century.

The last governor hailing from Philadelphia was Republican John C. Bell Jr. It wouldn't be fair to judge his record, though, because he served for only 19 days in January 1947. Bell, a lieutenant governor, was merely an asterisk between Edward Martin, who resigned early to run for the U.S. Senate, and James Duff, who had been elected governor the previous November.

Prior to Bell, there was Martin Brumbaugh, another Republican, who was elected in 1914. Formerly Philadelphia's school superintendent, Brumbaugh was a scholar, Penn professor and pawn of party boss Edwin Vare. As governor, he approved some bills improving workmen's



compensation and school and child labor laws. But, in general, Brumbaugh was a staunch opponent of social change, vetoing more than 400 bills of all types. With the U.S. entry into World War I, most of his attention turned to war matters. Although a state Senate committee was appointed to investigate his administration, Vare obstructed its efforts.

Edwin S. Stuart was the first Philadelphia mayor to become governor. Elected in 1906, Stuart was a no-nonsense Republican whose reforms included a law requiring appropriations to be specific, and a line-item veto. He made headlines, however, by investigating the Capitol furnishings fraud which marred the tenure of his predecessor, Samuel W. Pennypacker, another Philadelphian.

Pennypacker's was the most shameful administration in Pennsylvania's history. His nomination as Republican candidate was bought by the Philadelphia machine, which also fixed the general election by piling up an unprecedented 140,000 votes in his favor. Once in office, Pennypacker looked the other way as contractors working on the Capitol building charged \$5.3 million for only \$1.3 million worth of furnishings. But Pennypacker's most heinous acts were unleashing the state police on striking coal miners in 1905, despite the offer by President Theodore

Roosevelt to mediate the dispute, and forcing the Legislature to adopt a law forbidding the press to criticize any public official.

So who was the last popular Philadelphia Democrat to serve as governor? Robert E. Pattison, who held two non-consecutive terms, first from 1883 to 1887, and again from 1891 to 1895. Barely 33 when he was elected governor, Pattison was a genuine reformer. He swept out corrupt officeholders and replaced them, in most cases, with more honest officials.

Seeking reapportionment, he forced the Legislature into special session to vote on the measure. Pattison's second term was just as stormy, as he crusaded against the growing political power of railroads and other large corporations. Respected by Democrats across the nation, Pattison just missed being nominated for president in 1900.

Whether Ed Rendell decides to act on his stated intention to run for the governorship, he will continue to be tough-minded but colorful, candid but tactful, shrewd but honest and at once a showhorse and a workhorse.

It's what we've come to know and love about a man who may very well be the next Philadelphia governor. ■

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