

Valpo Mayor Costas seeking GOP nod for Indiana attorney general

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VALPARAISO | Mayor Jon Costas is seeking the Republican nomination for Indiana attorney general, he told The Times Tuesday afternoon.

Costas said he began considering the post three weeks ago, after Republican Attorney General Steve Carter announced he would not seek a third term.

"I took six days to do a lot of soul searching to determine whether or not this is something I could do logistically. I want to make sure that it doesn't have a negative impact upon my family, certainly not upon the city either," Costas told The Times. "I've come to the conclusion that I am seeking the nomination, and I am at this time attempting to gather the necessary support to obtain that nomination at the (state GOP) convention in June."

Costas, who drew no Democratic opponent on the way to a second mayoral term last year, could help bring regional balance to a November GOP ticket led by Gov. Mitch Daniels.

Lt. Gov. Becky Skillman, who is expected to stay on as Daniels' running mate, hails from southern Indiana. And Greater Clark County Schools Superintendent Tony Bennett, another southern Indiana Republican, is campaigning for state superintendent of public instruction. Current Republican state schools Superintendent Suellen Reed, has said she is leaning against seeking another term.

The Indiana Republican Party will slate candidates for the three statewide offices at its convention on June 2, but Daniels is expected to have a big say in who runs on his re-election ticket.

"The governor is aware that I'm seeking the nomination, and he seems very positive on my candidacy," Costas said. "We've had a great relationship. And I

think if you look at the type of leadership that he's bringing to the state, in a very real sense we've brought that type of leadership, in sort of a microcosm, to the city of Valparaiso."

Costas, now a part-time attorney specializing in elder law for the Valparaiso firm of Burke Costanza & Cuppy, said he would stay on as mayor if he secures his party's nomination. Local Republican precinct officials would select a new mayor if Costas ultimately were elected attorney general in November.

Four other prominent Republican lawyers have expressed interest in the attorney general's race. But one of them, Indiana Secretary of State Todd Rokita, bowed out Tuesday to make way for Costas

"My main concern is that we have a strong leader who can effectively represent the interests of the people of Indiana. I recently spoke with a good friend, Mayor Jon Costas, of Valparaiso, who has expressed interest in running for similar reasons," Rokita, a Munster native, said in a statement. "Because of this, I would support his candidacy 100 percent, not only for the strong leadership he will provide to another corner of the Statehouse, but it would allow me to continue my current service as secretary of state and spend more time with our newborn this year."

Greg Zoeller, Carter's chief deputy, also has expressed interest in the nomination for attorney general, along with Kyle Hupfer, a former director of the Indiana Department of Natural Resources and Tom Wheeler, the chairman of the Indiana Election Commission.

For more, read The Times on Wednesday.

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