

## Valpo mayor considers run as state AG

(<http://www.post-trib.com/news/885060,costas.article>)

April 9, 2008

By John Byrne Post-Tribune staff writer

VALPARAISO -- Mayor Jon Costas says Gov. Mitch Daniels is excited about his potential candidacy for attorney general.

Costas met privately with his staff Tuesday and said he will spend the next week "gauging support" for his bid to replace Attorney General Steve Carter, who withdrew from the Republican primary two weeks ago.

Costas, who's served as mayor since 2003, told Daniels about his plans to seek the nomination, which will be announced at the Republican state convention in early June.

He said although Daniels is excited about the candidacy, he has not endorsed him.

"Ultimately it is (Daniels') call, I think everyone has been saying that, all the candidates," Costas said. But the mayor's strength as a candidate became apparent Tuesday, when Secretary of State Todd Rokita withdrew his name from consideration for attorney general and threw his support behind Costas.

"Todd is a very strong political person statewide and I think that gives a pretty good indication of where this might be going," Costas said.

Daniels spokeswoman Jane Jankowski said the governor would not comment on Costas' candidacy. After Carter stepped down two weeks ago to seek work in the private sector, several Republicans let their interest in the post be known.

In addition to Rokita, Election Commission Chairman Tom Wheeler, former Daniels cabinet member Kyle Hupfer and Chief Deputy Attorney General Greg Zoeller have all said they want the job. Costas lauded the other candidates and said he would support whomever Daniels taps.

But he also touted his own experience as a coalition-builder in Northwest Indiana as a perfect fit in Indianapolis.

"I'm a bridge builder," Costas said. "I like working with people on different sides of the fence." Costas said, for instance, that he admired Democratic state Rep. Chet Dobis' leadership on the failed South Shore rail extension plan.

Costas pointed to his background as a certified elder law attorney in discussing where he would focus his efforts as attorney general.

He also spoke of broader influence as a member of Daniels' leadership team in Indianapolis.

"As a practical matter, you have the ability to influence policy and do a lot of good things. You have the governor's ear, and the ear of the other elected officials, so it's a tremendous opportunity," he said. Costas acknowledged supporters have in recent days cast the Attorney General's office as a stepping stone to the governor's mansion, but he insisted he is interested in serving as Indiana's top lawyer as an end in itself.

"I think you need to live life one step at a time. ... Clearly, if somebody is selected to this position it does change the outlook."

There is a stigma to overcome as a Northwest Indiana political figure seeking statewide office, Costas said.

"That's something I believe I can overcome," he said.

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