

# IN MY OPINION

Caroline Porter

## Moffitt on defensive: passing out the pork

Supporters of State Representative Donald Moffitt like to say how "nice" he is and that he is "everywhere." He certainly is everywhere, smiling a lot and dishing out our money, but he's not nice. He considers it an insult that anyone would run against him and he's a mean-spirited opponent. I got off easy in 1996 when he confronted union members and friends who supported

me and asked, "How can you support 'that woman?'" When the Kewanee Star-Courier ran a feature story about me during the campaign (I'm a Kewanee native) former editor Martha Szalo told me the next day he stormed into the newspaper offices with his henchmen, bellowed at and tried to intimidate the editors and publisher. That's his style.

His opponent this year is Josh Watson, a two year veteran of the AmeriCorps program and a stint in the office of Vice President Al Gore. Josh won't let me describe Moffitt's incivility towards him. But word is getting around.

Young Democrat volunteer Kessa Alvey told me Moffitt spotted her in an audience taking notes. He angrily confronted her afterwards. "Who do you work for? Where are you from?" While she recovered from this onslaught, he came back to her and charged, "Those notes had better represent me well," or something to that effect. Moffitt was inexcusably rude, even though he has the advantage of being a four term incumbent and, thanks to Republican Governor George Ryan and Illinois FIRST, can buy lots of votes with our tax dollars to throw around the district at election time. He also has a great war chest supported by special interest groups from outside the district.

Illinois is considered to have one of the most decadent political systems in the country.

And what has Moffitt contributed to changing that? Nothing. In eight years the legislation he has initiated and gotten passed has been practically nil. It's easy enough to hold Senator Hawkinson's hand and add his name as a bill's sponsor. He's done nothing about campaign finance



reform. He's not interested in legislation to change the definition of "agriculture" to enable local control of hog factories. School finance reform? He voted for one bill he knew would never get out of senate committee. That's not exactly providing leadership on the issue of tax reform of the base of school financing. Health care reform isn't even on his agenda. Moffitt's

impact in Springfield is insignificant and that won't change. To change the system takes strong leadership and passion, not fence sitting and playing it safe.

No, Moffitt is not a nice person. When he ran against Judy McCreery in his first race in 1992, she might have beaten him if he hadn't placed slanderous radio ads on about her and her family's financial problems the day before the election. McCreery sued him for libel and slander because statements in the ad were either false or half-true. But too late, the damage was done.

The young Democrats and Republicans at Knox College planned an October candidates meeting last spring and now Moffitt is complaining about the format - laying down detailed and difficult guidelines. The college young people and their faculty advisors are in charge and will deal with it. Welcome to Political Reality, 101.

We are always complaining that young people are apathetic about voting and politics. Watson's candidacy is inspiring the interest of young people in this community and district. They see a chance to change the "good old boy" politics and see that Watson's campaign is grass roots, for sure.

I don't think young people of either political party should be discouraged from participating in this privileged process. Instead of being threatened by and angry at the participation of our young Democrats, Moffitt should grow up - be an example of how to behave, and give them the encouragement and respect they deserve.

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