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Is Mike Prendergast distancing Himself from Rick Scott?

By Al Mccray

The Florida Department of Veteran Affairs is getting a new director, a well-qualified individual. He is Mr. Mike Prendergast, a retired Army colonel. He was Chief of Staff to Governor Rick Scott. This is definitely the man for the job. Florida veterans need someone like Mike who understands the needs and issues facing veterans. I feel, because of his twenty plus years in the military, that he will make all the necessary changes to improve the plight of veterans in Florida. I too am a veteran, and we need help.

But why is Mr. Prendergast making this move now? Why with all of his qualifications was he not appointed to the veterans' position day one of Rick Scott's term? Were there staff frictions in the Governor's mansion? Was the job as Chief of Staff was too limited for a full bird Army colonel? Were there management style clashes?

Or could it be that Mike Prendergast wants to be politician Mike Prendergast one day. Is he thinking any close association with the Governor could be a liability in any future political race? He ran and lost against Cathy Castor for Congress in 2010. Mr. Prendergast is a strategic thinker and planner. Could he be reading the writings on the political wall and understands that Rick Scott's 29% rating in Quinnipac University poll could cause him future problems. Just maybe that is on his mind.

Rick Scott has lost support heavily across the state and from members of his own party.

Mike's new appointment will definitely give him high public visibility and a chance to shine in the sun on his own merits. Mike got lots of merits and 12 months in that veterans post will certainly bring them out.

There are thousands and thousands of veterans and their families in our area that would appreciate his expertise, compassion and empathy with veterans' issues. His first job priorities will probably be getting vets claims at the Veterans Administration processed faster and working on finding jobs and housing for vets. These are not political issues. These are critical and important issues and making gigantic improvements in these areas could bring huge political rewards.

If Mike is eyeing and studying the political landscape in Tampa / Hillsborough County for 2012, he knows that there will be several elective seats available. There are Congressional races, multiple county commission seats, and house and senate seats. But if he picks a run again against Ms. Castor again, even if he does distances himself from the Governor, he will find it almost impossible to beat two local men, Mark Sharpe or Eddie Adams, in the primary. There are rumors that Mark, a very popular and conservative county commissioner might run. Eddie Adams is well known and has legions of dedicated followers and can raise lots of money.

It is anyone's guess where Mr. Scott's poll numbers will be this time next year. I feel that Mike Prendergast new job is a huge win for veterans and is an insurance policy for himself if he still has political ambitions.

I feel he could easily win a local senate or house seat. There is a good possibility of him winning a county wide commission seat.

Governor Scott, for whatever reason, gave the veterans of Florida a great man with a proven military record that is more than capable of improving our plights. There are veterans (many that were in combat) sleeping outside, going hungry, without jobs, going with adequate medical care, suffering from flash backs from hostile actions and facing years and years of getting their VA claims heard and resolved. (Even my VA claim is approaching three years).

I voted for Rick Scott and I am still a supporter of Rick Scott. I must admit that we have areas of disagreements, like Civil Rights Restoration and Drug testing poor people on welfare.

However these are tough times and I understand that these times require unpopular tough measures.