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Obama campaign bigwig sets sights on Montgomery council

Rierner: Transit, sound fiscal policy keys to future

by Erin Cunningham | Staff Writer

http://www.gazette.net/stories/07212010/montnew230838_32535.php

Hans Rierner says the current Montgomery County Council has made a lot of mistakes that created this year's \$1 billion budget shortfall.

"They were supposed to be minding the purse strings," said Rierner, a Democrat. "Instead, these guys thought their job was to give away all the coins."

Rierner, 37, of Silver Spring, is running for an at-large seat on the council. Four at-large seats are up for grabs.

He will face four incumbent council members and five other challengers in the Sept. 14 Democratic primary. The general election is Nov. 2.

The salary for a council member is \$94,351 per year.

Rierner was President Barack Obama's youth director for most of his primary campaign, serving from March 2007 to March 2008.

Rierner, who has lived in the county since 2004, ran for the council's District 5 seat in 2006, but was defeated by council Vice President Valerie Ervin (D) in the primary.

This time his campaign has been endorsed by Ervin, the Montgomery County Education Association, the State Employees International Union and — most recently — The Washington Post, among others.

Rierner says his priorities include transit, long-term fiscal planning and job creation.

"Transit is really the future of the county because we're maxed out on cars," he said.

Rierner, who worked for the AARP for two years before leaving earlier this year to focus on his campaign, says he supports the Purple Line, Ride On buses and a proposal by incumbent Councilman Marc Elrich (D-At large) of Takoma Park to build a Bus Rapid Transit system in the county.

BRT buses operate more like light-rail trains than typical buses and probably would run in the medians of existing roads.

The council's recent focus on the county's structural deficit — including a set of new fiscal policies adopted in June — is a step in the right direction, Riemer said. However, the council is required to examine its fiscal policy annually. The recent discussion was the first in the past four years.

"I don't have the Hans Riemer budget for Montgomery County, but I think that we have to be able to distribute cuts fairly and prioritize services that are essential," he said.

Hans Riemer

Residence: Silver Spring

Age: 37

Party: Democrat

Education: B.A., University of California at Santa Cruz

Work experience: Senior adviser for Volunteer and Civic Engagement at AARP; National youth vote director for Barack Obama's presidential campaign; Washington director for Rock the Vote; Strengthen Social Security campaign director at Institute for America's Future.

Family: Wife, Angela, and 2-year-old son Henry, with another boy on way

Top issues: Fiscal reform, protecting schools and services, bringing new jobs, supporting Metro and mass transit.

Campaign funds: More than \$100,000

Previous political experience: Candidate for Montgomery County Council from District 5 in 2006

Other affiliations: Board member and former president, Montgomery County's Action Committee for Transit; board member, National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare; past member, Silver Spring Advisory Board Neighborhoods Committee and the Long Branch Advisory Committee.

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