


[Site Map](#)

Thursday, April 23, 1998

COLUMN: Jon Ralston

Recall move has a larger impact


JON RALSTON
[MORE COLUMNS](#)

County Commissioner Yvonne Atkinson Gates sees it as her political life on the line. Dr. Terry Akers sees it as his chance to get a political life. But the good chiropractor's potential candidacy against Atkinson Gates will have a life well beyond whatever happens in their confrontation.

The Atkinson Gates-Akers matchup, should it occur, is nothing short of a preliminary war game preceding the wider conflict that will become Campaign '98 and extend far beyond -- a barometer for various political forces who will create alliances of convenience to test their strengths and expose weaknesses.

This is about Las Vegas Sands Inc. boss Sheldon Adelson vs. the Culinary union. This is about the Democratic Party vs. the Republican Party. This is about Adelson vs. the rest of the gaming industry. This is about a political backdrop where the Paycheck Protection Act (a k a the Workers Rights Initiative) has become a fulcrum elevating the profile of the state's labor movement and its most formidable adversary.

If those who would recall Atkinson Gates can qualify their effort, and Akers can acquire enough signatures to get on the ballot, their names will be but symbols of a deepening divide in Las Vegas, a schism that will force candidates up and down the ticket to take sides. It will be the first harbinger of whether Adelson will prove to be a pariah who self-immolated after taking on too many battles, or a pioneer who scorched the earth ploughed by his many adversaries. And it will offer insight into which wing of the state GOP will be dominant -- the Kenny Guinn wing or the Adelson wing.

Atkinson Gates and Akers both will benefit or suffer because of newfound allies focusing on broader agendas.

Many in the gaming industry who do not like

Adelson will rush to Atkinson Gates' defense. State Democratic Party Chairman Paul Henry recently lent his organization's imprimatur to a mail piece assailing Adelson and urging voters not to sign the recall petition. The Culinary plans to follow suit this week with a piece mailed to its large membership in Atkinson Gates' district. It attacks Adelson as a "billionaire bully."

Adelson's involvement in the Atkinson Gates recall also is inarguable. When I asked Charles Bennion, the titular organizer of the effort, who had contributed to the campaign, he said three donors, including Adelson. And who are the other two? He initially would not say, then acknowledged: "They're affiliated with Adelson." I'm shocked.

Akers, notwithstanding his connections in the African-American community, said he expects support from the county and state Republican parties. Akers' early announcement could be an indication that recall supporters are having trouble garnering the 4,380 required signatures. But the Adelsonites also want to ensure that they have a ready replacement for Atkinson Gates, not a Culinary-friendly appointee.

The would-be retailers are expected to put out their own mail piece lambasting Atkinson Gates' ethics. Considering the partisan overtones (the district is 3-to-1 Democratic) and the union's organizing capabilities, Atkinson Gates must be considered an early favorite.

The commissioner may be terrified of losing her elected job. But there are a few Republicans and a few gamers who are petrified of an Atkinson Gates loss because it will symbolize an Adelson win. There will be other fronts, too -- Adelson has signaled that his agenda includes ensuring ex-employee Shelley Berkley is not elected to Congress and Erin Kenny is not re-elected to the County Commission.

Ultimately, this will be a war with no DMZ. And come November, no matter how bloodied Akers and Atkinson Gates are, other candidates and incumbents will surely have been struck by stray bullets.

Jon Ralston publishes The Ralston Report, a political newsletter. His column appears Sunday, Tuesday and Thursday.

Give us your [FEEDBACK](#) on this or any story.

Fill out our [Online Readers' Poll](#)

[\[News\]](#) [\[Sports\]](#) [\[Business\]](#) [\[Lifestyles\]](#) [\[Neon\]](#) [\[Opinion\]](#) [\[in-depth\]](#)
[\[Columnists\]](#) [\[Help/About\]](#) [\[Archive\]](#) [\[Community Link\]](#) [\[Current Edition\]](#)
[\[Classifieds\]](#) [\[Real Estate\]](#) [\[TV\]](#) [\[Weather\]](#)
[\[EMAIL\]](#) [\[SEARCH\]](#) [\[HOME\]](#) [\[INDEX\]](#)

Brought to you by the Las Vegas Review-Journal. Nevada's largest daily newspaper.

For comment or questions, please email webmaster@lvvj.com

Copyright © Las Vegas Review-Journal