

People and Power: Analysts wait to see if donors' money goes to Whelan, Polistina or Langford

By JULIET FLETCHER Statehouse Bureau | Posted: Saturday, June 4, 2011 6:12 pm

The entrance of a surprise candidate into an already hotly contested state Senate race may put political donors in a tough spot.

Lorenzo Langford, mayor of Atlantic City, said this week he will file as an independent to run against his long-time political rival, incumbent state Sen. Jim Whelan.

Whelan already faces Republican challenger Vince Polistina, one of two sitting assemblymen in the 2nd district.

Langford has not filed paperwork to run so far, but his entrance into the race could come on or before Tuesday, which is the deadline for independent candidates to file a qualifying petition of 100 signatures.

At that point, local political analysts say, Langford's decision would affect the race — even if he doesn't make it to the finish line.

According to Sharon Schulman, executive director of the Hughes Center for Public Policy at Richard Stockton College, Langford's move could have an effect even in the short term in how local donors react to his candidacy.

"He could drop out at a certain point, but ther

Polistina issued a statement on Langford's intention to run, saying he hoped Langford's decision was based solely on a desire to debate the district's issues.

He said he hoped Langford was "not looking for an opportunity to escalate his longstanding

Lonegan claims casinos, which have high energy bills, suffer with RGG's surcharges. Lonegan claims the Borgata Hotel, Casino & Spa had reported those surcharges had further boosted their utility bills during difficult economic times in the industry.

Whelan said the casinos themselves had not felt strongly enough about the program to lobby him about it.

"I have never been approached by casinos about that issue," Whelan said.

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