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Each lt. gov. pick fits a need for ticket

By SHARON SCHULMAN
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Over the decades we have seen presidential candidates pick their running mates for all sorts of reasons and when the election is over, we rarely remember who they were (sometimes we don't even remember who the presidential candidate was).

When the vice presidential candidate is picked, a lot of forethought goes in to how it will affect the ticket. The country didn't pay too much attention to then-candidate Obama's pick of U.S. Sen. Joe Biden. He was safe and not too controversial.

Whether they liked her or did not like her, the selection of former Alaska Gov. Sarah Palin evoked a huge response. While interpreted differently by many voter factions, it made a statement about Sen. John McCain and the way he thinks.

For New Jerseyans, this is the first time we will have the opportunity to vote for a lieutenant governor bar for future gubernatorial candidates.

In this state, the job of the lieutenant governor has not been defined by the Legislature. The governor will have the opportunity to make this a useful position, the "reserve governor" who can step into the gubernatorial shoes and sit in the event something happens to a sitting governor.

Most importantly, we need to question whether the lieutenant governor candidate has the qualities needed to move into the role of governor on a moment's notice. Let's analyze the lieutenant governor

First on purpose

Republican candidate Chris Christie was -- deliberately -- the first candidate to announce his choice. The choice of state Sen. Loretta Weinberg complements Christie's strengths as a crime fighter and in many ways mirrors his views on state issues -- with the one notable exception that she is pro-choice and Christie is not. Given the arrests recently of political and religious figures for accepting bribes and other crimes, Christie's choice was fortuitous.

There are other statements this choice makes about candidate Christie. He wants the female vote. He wants to balance his conservative stance on abortion with a moderate stance. He appears to have a comfort level with law enforcement officials. He is willing to forgo major government experience and instead reinforce the notion that government outsiders are what New Jersey needs.

About demographics

Democratic Gov. Jon Corzine took a different tack. His choice is a self-described "feisty Jewish grandmother from Bergen County" state Sen. Loretta Weinberg. Corzine also wants the female vote,

however, he is looking for other demographics that his pick may help attract: Bergen County voters who make up approximately 10 percent of the state electorate. Because of Weinberg's age, 74, he is

taking on tobacco, liquor and insurance companies and authored ethics bills. She has taken on a political boss who later was indicted for corruption.

Rounding out

Independent candidate Chris Daggett announced former Kean University professor Frank Esposito as his choice. Candidate Daggett's campaign theme revolves around aspects surrounding the voter's life in New Jersey. Daggett brings environmental experience and rounds out his ticket with Esposito, an education leader. As a team they purport that the answer to the state's "economic mess" is to re-invest in education at all levels. By focusing on the environment and education as the road to the future, this team is reaching out to disgruntled voters looking for a different type of choice. In this instance the more common candidate selection traits such as gender, geography and political affiliation do not come into play.

The thinking and strategy are obviously different from one candidate to the other. Now it is up to you to decide whether or not the gubernatorial candidates made solid, wise choices and your comfort level on this person moving into the governor's chair if needed. Then decide if these choices will

Sharon Schulman is executive director of the William I. Hughes Center for Public Policy at The Richard Stockton College of New Jersey. Additional columns and information can be found at the