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Molinaro has earned right for another term

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Marc Molinaro has gotten off to a strong start in his first two years as a state Assemblyman and should be sent back to Albany to continue the work.

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Molinaro, a Republican, is facing a challenge from Anne Rubin, a Green Party member running on the Democratic line. They are seeking the 103rd Assembly District seat, which represents parts of northern and central Dutchess County.

Both candidates are concerned about the state budget shortfall and overall economic condition, and rightly so. Molinaro says the state has to get working on next year's budget now, that it can't wait until January to begin this work in earnest. The budget deadline is April 1.

In his mind, "nothing is off the table" in terms of possible cuts, but he offered a good list of places to start, such as giving early retirement incentives to some state employees.

Rubin agreed, saying that since 20 percent of the state's revenues come from Wall Street, looking at cuts across the board is necessary.

Both candidates believe the state has to deal with the property tax issue. They both support circuit breaker proposals that would provide relief to most taxpayers based upon their income and ability to pay. But Molinaro was more adamant the state address unfunded mandates as part of any tax relief equation.

Rubin said she wants the state to move to a "new energy economy" that focuses on alternative fuels and other green jobs. Rubin is active in the Red Hook community, serving on the town's conservation advisory council and zoning review committee. She wants the region to think more about sustainability issues, including environmental protections of water quality and farmlands. At an editorial board meeting with the Poughkeepsie Journal, she offered up many sound concepts but few specific programs to implement those ideas.

To his credit, Molinaro has bucked his party over environmental issues, supporting key bills that would:

- Provide stronger wetlands regulations than the federal government calls for.
- Expand the state's bottle bill to reduce landfill waste and raise money for the state's coffers.
- Back the state's efforts to reduce global warming emissions from industry.

He also has criticized both political parties for financial raids on the state's Environmental Protection Fund, pointing out this is the financial source for so many important efforts, such as open space protection.

Moreover, as a former mayor of the Village of Tivoli and as a former Dutchess County legislator, Molinaro

ON THE WEB

- <http://annerubin.net>

- www.marcmolinaro.com

hasn't lost his small-town sensibility. He has been a strong liaison with local government. When a growing number of towns and residents in those towns, started complaining about the manner in which a property assessment consulting firm was doing its work, Molinaro took notice. While cautioning that he did not intend a witch hunt, Molinaro said, "The customers, local municipalities, believe they are not getting what they contracted for." He cited complaints about the firm's methodology, as well as taxpayer response to the assessments. A state agency is complying with that review request.

Molinaro has been a solid representative, especially for a first-term Republican assemblyman in that Democratic-controlled house. He will have to build on that credibility and work with politicians across the aisle to get more done for his district and the state. Over the years, in various capacities, Molinaro has shown the ability to do just that.

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