GOVERNOR’S RACE KICKS INTO HIGH GEAR

GET SET ... GO!

- PALEOLOGOS: Now or never for hopefuls
- BATTENFELD: How upstart could win
- CHABOT: Hub’s in play this time
- NUCCI: Race of redemption

... with video at bostonherald.com
Herald, Suffolk U. team for gov race

On to the race for governor!

The Herald and Suffolk University, building on the success of an innovative partnership in providing in-depth coverage of the Boston mayoral race, are teaming up again for the Massachusetts governor’s race.

Respected pollster David Paleologos will offer his surveys and analysis exclusively in the Herald, along with deep behind-the-scenes analysis in his featured “Poll Pal” column. Suffolk’s John Nacci will weigh in with commentary on the latest from the campaign trail alongside Herald reporters and columnists.

New this campaign cycle will be “Boiler Room,” a webcast featuring Suffolk students and professors joining Herald political staffers and GOP and Democratic strategists to look closely at the issues and campaign messages.

“Partnering with the Boston Herald in its coverage of the governor’s race provides students with the hands-on learning experiences that are a hallmark of a Suffolk education,” Suffolk University President Jim McCarthy said. “As we did with the Boston mayoral race, we look forward to working with the Herald to provide insights into this critical race through polls, forums, debates and commentary.”

Herald President and Publisher Patrick J. Purcell said, “We couldn’t be more excited to extend our partnership with Suffolk. Based on our proven success, the voters will be the winners with the informative and comprehensive coverage our team will offer from start to finish of this important campaign.”

In the Boston mayoral race, the Herald and Suffolk sponsored the only televised preliminary debate presented by New England Cable News. There were multiple polls by Paleologos and interviews and mini-debates on Boston Herald Radio. Students studying the mayoral election toured the Herald newsroom and sat down with former Mayor Raymond Flynn and political columnist Joe Battenfeld.

Suffolk students also produce the “Press Party” media analysis webcast presented each week on bostonherald.com.

Students raise voices for candidates to hear

With less than a year to go before the gubernatorial election, Suffolk University students said they want to be players in this race, and they want to be heard on their issues.

“The candidates have to get out to the students,” said Laura Piscopo, who is finishing her master’s degree in public administration at Suffolk.

Piscopo can make the case that students are not a uniform, easily dismissed demographic, as political operatives often see them. She’s a mid-life career changer with a 13-year-old daughter. For her, the biggest issues are skyrocketing tuition and loan repayment. “It’s incredibly overwhelming,” Piscopo said.

Government major Rose Garcia, 20, said, “My issue, which I’ve talked about a lot, is jobs for students coming out of graduation.”

It’s an issue that also resonates with Piscopo, who believes job growth would keep more college graduates in Massachusetts.

Garcia also expressed her concern with unpaid internships. “It is something that is a concern to a lot of students because not a lot of students are able to work unpaid internships while also living in the Boston and Greater Boston area.” It represents a socioeconomic disparity that is often overlooked, Garcia said.

Compensation, however, the sophomore continued, doesn’t need to come in the form of a minimum-wage paycheck. It could be reimbursement for travel or a stipend. For Nick Waiwiliw, another sophomore studying government, making Boston more green is an issue he would like to see the candidates tackle, and it needs to be a concrete plan — “something rather than energy-efficient light bulbs.”

By ERICA MOURA

VIDEO ONLINE

Fit your browser’s window with an ally featuring buildings to be more energy efficient and to protect them from what he sees as inevitable rising tides are things he would like to see.

These Suffolk students also say they are looking for someone who can lead with transparency.

“I want someone who is honest, and someone who is transparent from the day they start running to the day they finish their time as governor,” Garcia said. “Especially when it comes to money.”

As for the campaign ads that are bound to come out, with the candidates walking dogs, and laughing with family, and holding babies:

“That doesn’t necessarily resonate with me,” Piscopo said. “Is this person a leader is more what resonates with me.”

— erica.moura@bostonherald.com
GOV FRONT-RUNNERS SEEK 2ND CHANCES

With Thanksgiving’s football and family political battles behind us, it’s time to sample the early fixings of the candidates for governor in 2014. It may appear a long way out, but it is now or never for candidates to decide whether or not to run.

The Democratic and Republican caucuses are just 10 weeks away, so potential party candidates must put field teams in place now and raise big money to be viable early on.

Currently, the menu contains eight candidates declared for governor with a good mix of backgrounds: Two are constitutional officers, Attorney General Martha Coakley and Treasurer Steve Grossman; three candidates currently hail from the private sector, Democrat Joseph Avellone and independents Jeffrey McCormick and Evan Falchuk; two served in the Obama administration, Democrats Donald Berwick and Juliette Kayyem; and finally, the 2010 Republican nominee Charlie Baker, who was a health care CEO and Weld Administration cabinet secretary.

Among the initial eight, early polling will favor the candidates who have run statewide before, especially Martha Coakley, who leads comfortably in both the Democratic primary and general election polling. But the big question is how the voting public will treat her on Nov. 4, 2014.

After an embarrassing loss to Republican Scott Brown in the 2010 U.S. Senate special election, Coakley scrambled to run for re-election less than 10 months later and won by a decisive margin of more than 20 percentage points (61-36).

In Massachusetts, we continue to be a voting public that rewards candidates who learn from their mistakes and show resiliency, whether they are Democrats or Republicans. After electing him governor in 1974, Democrats kicked Mike Dukakis out of office in 1978, but the voting public returned a more politically savvy Dukakis to two terms beginning in 1982. Republican Joe Malone lost to U.S. Sen. Edward M. Kennedy by more than 30 points in 1988 but shortly thereafter was elected treasurer for two terms beginning in 1990.

Although the early polling seems to suggest that voters are willing to give Coakley a second chance at higher office, there are some hurdles she must face.

Her polling numbers probably won’t go up much from here because as the “known quantity,” Coakley’s numbers will pare down as unknown candidates introduce themselves and grab greater voter share.

With Juliette Kayyem in the Democratic primary, Coakley will not have a clear gender advantage that she had in December of 2009, when she easily beat three men for the Democratic nomination for U.S. Senate;

• Coakley must combat the historical stigma of being an attorney general trying to run for governor — a losing journey for many past AGs;

• A Democratic convention upset by Kayyem, Berwick or Grossman could change the dynamics and shake up the race in June;

• If Coakley won the Democratic nomination on Sept. 16 she would have to convince independent voters — the largest block of registered voters in Massachusetts — that she is worthy of their vote this time around even though she lost among independents by a 35-percentage-point margin (65-30) against Scott Brown in the final Suffolk poll.

Finally, though the early polling could be a fundraising bonanza for Coakley over the next few months, it also could be a curse because front-runner status will force her campaign to protect her polling advantage by being overly cautious — a path she took with no success in 2000.

Whoever the Democrats select, the nominee will most likely face Republican Charlie Baker and two independents. Baker will be hoping to stage his own comeback from his unsuccessful 2010 bid for governor. Like Coakley, he’ll be looking for a second chance coming off a race he thought he was going to win.

Time will tell if voters see him as an improved candidate to whom they are willing to give a second chance.
Kayyem is biggest threat to Coakley, GOP

The Democrats’ ideal candidate for governor — and the GOP’s worst nightmare — is a woman who can excite party liberals while running against business-as-usual politics on Beacon Hill.

That candidate right now is not Attorney General Martha Coakley, but it could end up being another woman in the race, Juliette Kayyem.

While Coakley is desperate—trying to channel the spirit of U.S. Sen. Elizabeth Warren — even hiring the architect of Warren's campaign, Doug Rubin — Kayyem has been quietly raising money and meeting with local activists.

The former state and Obama administration homeland security adviser has raised only a modest $395,000 so far, and hasn't scored any big endorsements. But if the Coakley campaign and Democratic power bosses can't push Kayyem out of the race, she's the biggest threat to Republican hopes of winning back the State House.

"You have to be honest about expectations, about what government can do," Kayyem said in a phone interview. "People are really receptive to the truth." That statement is tantamount to heresy in a Democratic primary, where candidates will be promising voters that government can fix almost everything. But if Coakley flops again, and Treasurer Steve Grossman bores voters to death, Kayyem could emerge as the surprise nominee. If that happens, Republicans could find themselves running against another liberal Democrat with personal charisma and history-making appeal. Sound familiar?

Kayyem bills herself as a take-over specialist and bipartisan problem-solver who wants a budget review of where all revenue is going. "Part of what I know how to do is walk across the aisle," she said, citing her work with Republican governors Bobby Jindal of Louisiana, Rick Perry of Texas and Haley Barbour of Mississippi, while helping oversee federal cleanup funds for the BP oil spill in the Gulf. But Kayyem is no moderate Democrat. She loves just about everything Patrick has done and is open to raising taxes again. When asked whether President Obama should have told the truth about the Affordable Care Act, forcing millions of people off their health care plans, she punts.

"Looking back at this, the more people who are insured is the only story we can take out of this," Kayyem said.

No, it's not, actually. So much for telling the "truth." But if Kayyem stops trying to become the next Deval Patrick or Barack Obama and starts acting more like a real bipartisan problem-solver, she might actually win.

Experienced candidates will try different approach

The 2013 mayor's race is over, but around here one big election always seems to lead right into another. As the 2014 governor's race begins in earnest, the operative word in the storyline as it stands now is "redemption."

The two candidates occupying most of the early conversation are Attorney General Martha Coakley and former gubernatorial candidate Charlie Baker. Both of these individuals have seen personal and political successes as well as stinging defeats. Both have fought and lost high-profile campaigns. This time out, they will be trying to show themselves to voters in a different light.

In January of 2010 Coakley, a Democrat, ran into a tidal wave by the name of Republican Scott Brown during the special election to fill the U.S. Senate seat held by the late Ted Kennedy. Though many argue Coakley was too detached and lost a race she should have won, a very good case can be made that no Democrat could have overcome the mood of the voters or the "lightning in the bottle" that Brown captured and held for that fleeting moment. When voters want a change from the status quo, it almost doesn't matter who the candidates are or what they're saying. Regardless of the legend it's become, it is hard to believe, for example, that Coakley lost because of things like saying she didn't see the wisdom of shaking hands in the cold outside a hockey game at Fenway Park. Nevertheless, she didn't come across well enough to defeat the underdog Brown.

In November of that year, Republican Charlie Baker had all the tools in his toolbox to challenge incumbent Deval Patrick and to serve as governor. His roster of accomplishments was stellar. He was more than qualified. A third candidate, Treasurer Tim Cahill, was in the race, but more importantly he often came across as aloof and too technical for the voters’ appetites. It was a textbook case of elections being about leadership, not competence. Baker says that he’s learned from it, though. If you know either of these people, you know that they are entirely unlike the images they left behind in their 2010 campaigns. Both are normal, personable, bright and truly likable individuals. They now seek redemption. They will want to be seen differently.

The challenge will be to run as new and improved versions of their 2010 selves without it looking contrived. Voters catch on to that pretty quickly and if they do, it would be a sudden death.

Another thing: There are few other candidates in this fray. All unknown. We'll get to them later. But remember, in 2006 it was an unknown who eventually became governor; some guy named Deval Patrick!