

Herald-Leader Endorses Ben Chandler

Oct 17, 2010

Independent lawmaker has state at heart

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Re-elect Chandler to U.S. House

Independent lawmaker has state at heart

Coming from a state where the coal industry remains a political kingmaker even as the number of jobs it provides continues to dwindle away, U.S. Rep. Ben Chandler had to "man up" to support an energy bill that included a cap-and-trade approach to reducing carbon emissions' contribution to global warming and the extreme weather conditions it has produced.

Chandler cast the difficult vote because, in his words, "I thought of my children, their future ..."

It was the right thing to do, the courageous thing to do, the independent thing to do. Despite the bill's \$60 billion to develop clean coal technology, which Chandler championed, the vote still held considerable potential for causing him political harm.

Andy Barr, Chandler's Republican opponent in the Nov. 2 election, and the shadowy figures funding various organizations' attack ads against Chandler try to depict the cap-and-trade vote as representing some puppet-like response to the bidding of President Barack Obama and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi. Nothing could be further from the truth.

(Barr also is airing almost three-year-old footage of candidate Obama describing a pure cap-and-trade system, a far cry from the plan that Chandler supported. The bill approved by the House is full of provisions to protect consumers and electrical utilities from steep cost increases.)

Chandler's independence was on display in his vote against Obama's health care reform measure (we disagreed with him on that one nearly as much as we agreed with him on the cap-and-trade bill) and his refusal to vote for the bipartisan bailout of Wall Street.

Even his early support for Obama in the 2008 Democratic primary represented a risky level of independence in a state where most of the Democratic establishment and an overwhelming
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majority of Democratic voters favored former first lady and current Secretary of State Hillary Clinton.

During his three terms in Congress, his two terms as state attorney general and his one term as state auditor, Chandler sometimes has given us reason to question the soundness of his positions.

But his maturation as a representative of the 6th District in the U.S. House — best demonstrated by his cap-and-trade vote — has given us considerably less reason to question the motives that led him to take those positions.

Chandler personifies many of the conservative principles of Kentucky Democrats, particularly on fiscal issues. At the same time, though, he shows a commendable sensitivity to environmental concerns and the plight of the state's most needy citizens.

The same cannot be said of his opponent. Barr unquestioningly recites the 2010 Republican/Party of No/Tea Party movement themes that everything good about the protections big government provides is evil and everything evil about deregulation is good.

Barr would take us back to the George W. Bush years that produced the worst economic meltdown since the Great Depression.

Barr's few years' functioning as part of the failed administration of former Gov. Ernie Fletcher fall far short of Chandler's nearly 20 years of public service.

And Barr's knowledge and understanding of the issues confronting this state and the nation are minuscule compared to Chandler's.

Barr is the real puppet in this race. Chandler is the experienced, accomplished and independent incumbent who deserves a return trip to the U.S. House.

The unendorsed candidate may submit a 250-word response by noon Wednesday.



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