

Laxalt adds twist to Nevada AG race

By Jon Ralston, Politico

Dick Cheney calls him “courageous” and says electing him “is of the highest priority.”

John Bolton traveled across the country to headline a fundraiser for him. Newt Gingrich, Frank Fahrenkopf, Tom Ridge and Ed Meese (remember him?) all appeared at the same D.C. event to celebrate his candidacy. Donald Rumsfeld gave him a personal check for \$5,000, part of a half-million-dollar haul.

Who is this remarkable contender attracting such a list of national GOP luminaries? What remarkably accomplished figure could warrant such attention? Who can command encomia from a former vice president, attorney general, defense secretary, House speaker, chairman of the Republican National Committee and Homeland Security secretary?

Adam Laxalt, that’s who.

Who?

Laxalt is only 34, has never run for office before and is campaigning for attorney general—attorney general!—in Nevada, where he has been a cipher until just recently and whose last name explains ... everything. That’s because Laxalt has one of the most unusual pedigrees in American politics: He’s the grandson of Paul Laxalt, the former senator and Ronald Reagan confidant once known as “the first friend” – still, at 91, casting a long if not always visible shadow in Nevada politics.

Awkwardly, young Laxalt is also the illegitimate son of Sen. Pete Domenici, his grandfather’s longtime Senate colleague. In

fact, it was only last year that Adam Laxalt's mother Michelle, a 24-year-old Reagan operative at the time of the affair and now a well-known Washington lobbyist, revealed her son's parentage for the first time, a sensational revelation that almost certainly had the effect of clearing the way for his political career.

It gets better. Laxalt's Democratic foe is another political royal, Nevada Secretary of State Ross Miller, the son of a former governor and the overwhelming favorite to win. But that's also what's made the race such a spectacle: Miller, the Nevada Democratic Party's rising star and presumed 2018 gubernatorial candidate, has become a top target of Republican potentates like casino magnate Sheldon Adelson, who has launched a Stop Miller Now campaign and is bankrolling Laxalt along with his grandfather's Reagan-era friends.

As one prominent Nevada Republican puts it, "If his name were Adam Smith, this race would be a total joke." But his name is Adam Laxalt, and that's why Democrats aren't laughing.

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