

Will Dem squeak past 8 Republicans in Placer Assembly race?

By Jeremy B. White, Sacramento Bee

Before the eight Republicans jockeying to claim an open Assembly seat began their debate last week, the party faithful in attendance were treated to some light political metaphor.

Images of a lion and buffalo flashed across a screen against pulsing drum and flute music, telling a parable of buffalo banding together to repel an invading predator. But the next time the lion approached, the text warned, the buffalo scattered and were easily devoured one by one. Quotes about unity and solidarity followed. Then, a note of caution.

A race in a reliably Republican district, anchored in Placer County, would seem to pose little risk for the GOP. But, as wary campaign managers would attest, a safe open seat in the top-two primary era can be a dangerous thing.

With Assemblywoman Beth Gaines, R-El Dorado Hills, forced out by term limits and leaving no obvious heir, a crowded field of Republican contenders has formed. Not one stands as a clear frontrunner, with money and endorsements scattered throughout.

The two candidates who garner the highest pluralities in the June primary will advance regardless of party.

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