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## Williams Seen As Front-Runner In DA Primary

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*Of the Legal Staff*

Polls taken by the campaigns show some tightening in the race for Philadelphia district attorney but all of them place Seth Williams at the top of the field, officials from some of the leading campaigns have told *The Legal Intelligencer*.

Meanwhile, campaign advisers for Dan McCaffery and Dan McElhatton both argue that polling shows their man in second place.

Whether or not the campaigns' own polling will accurately predict the result of the May 19 primary is still up in the air, political observers say. That's because the candidates are just beginning to push to reach undecided Democratic voters and voters who aren't even yet aware there is a district attorney primary.

However, many of the city's significant endorsements have rolled in and charges and countercharges have begun flying among some of the campaigns. But those observers say that the endorsements and the campaign crossfire won't affect voters' decision-making very much unless the campaigns have the money in order to pay for media campaigns, phone calls and fliers to promote both positive and negative messages that could push voters their way in a low turnout, low interest election.

Politicos also say that campaign resources and connections will be key to getting out voters.

"It's going to be about who can get their folks out to vote," said Mike Pratt of Pepper Hamilton. "People aren't really fired up about this election. There's nothing out at the top of

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the ticket, which means those union endorsements and organizational endorsements are going to mean more."

The next campaign finance filing date is May 8, so it won't be clear until then how much campaign cash is on hand for each of the candidates to spend.

## THE LEADERS

While Williams is seen as the front-runner and McCaffery and McElhatton argue over who is in second, Brian Grady and Michael Turner are still seeking traction in the race.

When asked about the possibility that McElhatton is polling second, Anthony Ingargiola, McElhatton's campaign manager, said: "Considering his lengthy career

in public service, it's not surprising that he'd be polling so well and people would be responding to his message. The general position ... these sources are indicating is not inconsistent with our internal data."

Josh Morrow, McCaffery's campaign manager, fired back, saying that McCaffery's campaign is seeing McCaffery in second place in the campaign's numbers.

"I don't dispute Williams might be in first place but there's no way in hell McElhatton is in second place," Morrow said.

Ingargiola also doesn't dispute that Williams is polling No. 1.

Dan Fee, campaign manager for Williams, said the campaign doesn't disclose its internal polling, but Fee did say in response to the fact *The Legal* heard Williams is polling No. 1: "We're not surprised by that given the reception Seth is getting on the street. We feel very

comfortable about where we are in the campaign right now."

## THE GROUND GAME

Mark A. Aronchick, of Hangley Aronchick Segal & Pudlin, said that Williams, McElhatton and McCaffery have separated themselves from the other two candidates, but he predicted it wouldn't be clear until next week which of the campaigns has "the money and message and ground game" needed to win.

The campaigns with those resources will have public activities like rallies at churches, union hall meetings and community group gatherings, and will have staff or volunteers door-knocking and distributing campaign literature, Aronchick said.

Zack Stalberg, director of the Committee of Seventy reform group, said there is very little interest by Philadelphians in the district attorney race or the city controller

race, so this election is an "inside game" that will be determined by candidate name recognition, "clarity of message," campaign cash and endorsements from ward leaders and others.

Williams is in first place because he ran against retiring incumbent Lynne Abraham in 2005 and has name recognition, Morrow said. But Morrow thinks that will change.

Morrow argues that the campaign that raises the most money and has the most resources to communicate with voters will be able to win the race. He promises McCaffery has the resources to do direct mail and television ads, and will have a field operation "second to none."

## ENDORSEMENTS

McCaffery has secured most of the endorsements from Philadelphia labor unions, while Williams has secured

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important endorsements from the Black Clergy of Philadelphia and the Vicinity and from a number of progressive groups like Liberty City Democratic Club, a Philadelphia lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender political group.

Williams also has the endorsement of the Fraternal Order of Police Lodge #5, Guardian Civic League and the *Philadelphia Inquirer*.

Ingargiola points out the city's top two elected officials, Mayor Michael A. Nutter and Abraham, haven't made any endorsements yet and their endorsements could have a significant impact on the race.

A spokesman for Nutter and a spokeswoman for Abraham both said Nutter and Abraham respectively haven't decided if they're going to make an endorsement or not.

Some political watchers said they don't

believe Nutter or Abraham will make an endorsement.

## WHO WILL TURN OUT?

On paper, Williams has an open field because he's running against three Irish-American candidates — McCaffery, McElhatton, and Grady — and Turner, the only other black candidate in the race, has not made a dent, said Larry Ceisler, a political strategist with Ceisler Jubelirer in Philadelphia.

Williams is also trying to appeal to left-leaning progressives, while Grady and McCaffery are law-and-order types, he said.

But while Williams' path to the nomination appears more clear than the others',

he could face a hurdle if black voters turn out in smaller numbers for what has been so far a low-profile race, Ceisler said.

The vital question, Ceisler said, is: "Will you be able to get your voters out?"

"It'll be about turnout in what's a low election year," he explained, adding "I still don't see Seth as cause celebre for African-American voters."

J. Wyatt Mondesire, publisher of *The Philadelphia Sunday Sun* and president of the local chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, said Williams could be affected if black voters don't turn out and said that a lot of black voters don't vote in the district attorney's

race because of the association of that office with "so many people of color ... confined in jail."

However, Mondesire believes Williams is way ahead in the race because he got a surge of support after being temporarily removed from the ballot because of a legal action brought by McCaffery.

"McCaffery misjudged it," said Mondesire, referring to the speed in which the Commonwealth Court overturned Philadelphia Common Pleas Judge Allan L. Tereshko's decision to remove Williams from the ballot.

Mondesire supported Williams in 2005 and once again is supporting him in his role as a newspaper publisher. Mondesire said Williams didn't have the support of any of the city's black ward leaders in 2005 in his bid against Abraham, but now he does.

Jeff Yurcan, Grady's campaign manager, and Harry Cook, Turner's campaign manager, both said Grady and Turner will be in the race till the end and are working as hard as they can to get their messages out to voters.

*Josh Morrow argues that the campaign that raises the most money and has the most resources to communicate with voters will be able to win the race.*