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Blogs Sullivan to run for DA

Bid sets up first contest since 1982

By **DAN CROWLEY**
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NORTHAMPTON - Seeing "room for improvement," David E. Sullivan, Hampshire County's registrar of probate and family court, intends to run for the office of Northwestern district attorney in 2010.

"I'm just doing the groundwork now to build a team to run," Sullivan told the Gazette Monday. "I think the time is right to have some new leadership."

Sullivan, 49, an Easthampton Democrat, said he's been asked by attorneys and community leaders to consider running for the two-county district attorney's office. The post has been held by Elizabeth D. Scheibel, a Republican, for the past 15 years.

Sullivan noted there hasn't been a contested election for the office since 1982, and he said one of his main goals as district attorney would be to strengthen the ties between the area's chief law enforcement office and the communities it serves in Franklin and Hampshire counties.

"It's going to be up to the public to talk about what the district attorney's office means to them," Sullivan said. "My track record is to collaborate on a community level to make the justice system better."

"Without the public's goodwill, we can't have a viable justice system," he added.

Scheibel said she wasn't surprised that someone has shown interest in running for the job. She said she would hold up her record of crime prevention and community involvement against anyone and described the latter as "one of the hallmarks of my administration."

"There's always more that can be done," Scheibel said.

A prosecutor for the past 28 years, Scheibel, 53, said it was too early to talk about her plans, saying only, "We'll continue to do the work we've been doing."

"I'll make my announcement at the appropriate time," she said in a telephone interview Monday. "It's hard for me to say what will happen in two years."

Former Gov. William Weld appointed Scheibel to the post in 1993 to serve the remainder of former district attorney Judd Carhart's term, when he was appointed a state Superior Court judge.

A South Hadley resident, Scheibel was the first woman in the state to be appointed a district attorney. She was elected to the post in 1994 and has been re-elected in uncontested elections ever since.

Based in Northampton, the Northwestern District Attorney's Office serves 47 cities and towns. The office is staffed by about 100 employees, including some 30 attorneys and a state police detective investigative unit. The annual salaries of the state's 11 district attorneys, set by the state Legislature, stands at \$148,843.

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DAVID

SULLIVAN



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In a profile of Scheibel, the National District Attorney's Association noted that she takes seriously the DA's role as a community leader. The group quoted Scheibel as saying, "Education is the key to reducing crime, and we're very lucky to be in a jurisdiction that welcomes community involvement by the DA's office. We do it in the area of elder crime prevention, child abuse, domestic violence and crimes against persons with disabilities."

Collaboration

Sullivan said he believes more can be done to reconnect the district attorney's office with the public in terms of fighting and preventing crime. As district attorney, he said he would build on the successes of the office but also noted that it's important for the DA's office to recruit and attract the best trial attorneys, engage the public, and work closely with other law enforcement officials.

Sullivan said he plans to meet with Scheibel in the near future to discuss his intentions. He has not formally announced his candidacy for office.

Raised in Framingham, Sullivan received his law degree from Northeastern University. He began his law career in 1987 as a defense attorney doing general and special courts-martial in West Germany and later moved to western Massachusetts, where he started a law practice with his wife and concentrated on criminal and civil litigation.

After 16 years as an active trial lawyer, in 2002 he was elected registrar of Hampshire County Probate and Family Court, based in Northampton, where he has focused his efforts on making the probate courts more accessible to the public.

Most recently, he was a co-coordinator of President Barack Obama's campaign in Hampshire County and also received the Massachusetts Bar Foundation's 2008 President's Award, one of two attorneys statewide recognized for volunteerism, leadership and a commitment to increasing access to the state's justice system.

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