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Moscone Campaign falters

San Francisco Magazine

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George R. Moscone,

State Senator

Moscone is tough for the experts to fathom. They give him exceedingly high grades for almost everything, then find it difficult to explain why his candidacy is not stronger, despite an early launching and hard work on his part. With the passage of time, they see his chances becoming slimmer and his fund-raising ability suffering the same fate.

One of the campaign pros put it this way: "He has money-raising potential and he knows how to do it. If his little airplane would get off the ground, it would soar. But it just hasn't gotten off the ground in two years now."

Moscone, 44, is also credited with having the best credentials among the Democratic candidates to receive the liberal Democratic vote, traditionally considered vital in a Democratic primary race. "He has the ability to appeal to a broad range of Democrats including the libs, the young, the eager," a knowledgeable campaign manager said. "He's a fine liberal with the best record of any of the guys."

Praise for the former San Francisco supervisor, now majority floor leader in the State Senate, was bountiful from all the handicappers.

"Good looking, articulate, smart, personable."

"Experience, humor. On a one-to-one basis he is really good. Sort of like Hubert Humphrey."

"Makes good public appearance. Shares with some other candidates being a tireless campaigner. Does not stop."

"Does fairly good job of lining up old-time political leaders and laying down a basic organization of county leaders, seasoned activists, and so on."

If demanded, the campaign managers will offer some explanation of why Moscone's "airplane" has not taken off. It is shared by most of them. A typical comment was: "No one takes him very seriously. It's hard for him to come off as a guy about which you say 'this guy is going to be the nominee and governor.' He doesn't come up heavy enough. He has little name recognition compared to Alioto, Brown, and Moretti. He's virtually unknown in Southern California."

The evaluations of Moscone's campaign financial strength ranged from "very poor" to "modest by comparison with others." One of the political handicappers had it "going downhill because people are thinking he is going to drop out, or should drop out."

"His real problem," one pro explained,

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“is that Alioto is cutting him up in Northern California by gathering in labor, Catholics, and liberal forces, and Moretti is doing the same in the south. They are doing the same thing to hurt his financial strength, leaving less for him. And Moretti also hurts Moscone’s fund-gathering success in Sacramento.”

The campaign managers were brutal but sympathetic in giving advice for Moscone:

“Run again for the State Senate and wait for a better day. Maybe run for Mayor of San Francisco.

“Withdraw. He’s young. He has a good enough future. He should get a little more of a maturity image.

“Get out. Make a deal with a Southern California candidate and go for Lieutenant Governor on the short end of the ticket.”

Consensus: Little chance for gaining primary nomination and getting slimmer with passage of time. Attractive candidate, but needs more stable and solid image. Could be a future choice.

Jerome R. Waldie,

U.S. Congressman

With Waldie there is no mystery about why he has not made any substantial impact to date in the run for the Democratic primary nomination. An appalling lack of both money and name-recognition are pinpointed by all the campaign managers. The name-recognition problem was reduced to some degree by his 240-mile walk through Southern California last August but is still considered to be a major obstacle.

The paeans of praise from all the pros about the one-time state assemblyman, now 48, make him appear to be the most qualified and able candidate in either party. If the campaign pros questioned were to vote for their choice as the most competent candidate for governor, the chances are that Waldie would be their choice.