

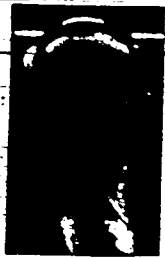
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Republican Chairman Anthony Colavita

Colavita leaving N.Y. party job

GOP chief won't seek 3rd term, may step down sooner

By Milton Hoffman
Senior Editor, Politics Writer

State and Westchester Republican Chairman Anthony Colavita will announce today that he will not run for a third term as state chairman in September and may step down earlier if the state committee agrees on a successor.

According to a high-ranking state Republican source, the Westchester lawyer will end several months of speculation about whether he would retain the two jobs by saying he has found it difficult to perform both. Colavita is also expected to say he wants to devote his energies to ensure the re-election of Westchester County Executive Andrew P. O'Rourke and the Republican majority on the Westchester

Board of Legislators

Colavita declined to comment publicly

Two months ago, Jonathan Bush, chairman of the state Republican Finance Committee and brother of President Bush, urged Colavita to give up one of his two jobs so he could devote more time to the remaining political position. Colavita considered the request. He

said, because it came from the Bush family, which he regards as political allies.

Two weeks ago, Colavita said he had decided to doff one of his political hats, but didn't disclose which.

Colavita, in the office for 3 1/2 years, will outline his position in a letter to be mailed to GOP chairmen of the other 61 counties and to all 408 members of the Republican State Committee. The letter reportedly states that

Please see COLAVITA, A7

Colavita would be prepared to step down before the end of his present two-year term if the state committee agrees on his successor.

By working through the state committee, Colavita was indicating that he wanted that body to name the successor and would not permit a high Republican elected official like U.S. Sen. Alfonse D'Amato to act as kingmaker. D'Amato has not been regarded as a strong supporter of Colavita and has not disguised his desire for a change in leadership.

One most often mentioned as a possible successor to Colavita is J. Patrick Barrett, a Syracuse businessman, former chairman of Avis and former Onondaga Republican chairman. Barrett repeatedly has said he might seriously consider the prospect, but not unless Colavita publicly decides to quit.

By remaining as Westchester chairman, Colavita is expected to continue to hold a seat on the state executive committee of the party.

In Westchester, Republicans are facing an all-out assault by Democrats, who have increased their voter enrollment margin to 10,800 over Republicans. O'Rourke, who ran for governor in 1986 at Colavita's request when all other viable GOP candidates declined to face Gov. Mario Cuomo, is expected to face Westchester Democratic Assemblyman Richard Brodsky in November.

Colavita won the state chairmanship in 1985, a post that pays \$75,000 a year, by beating out Victor Farley, the Erie County GOP chairman. He said at the time he planned to continue also as Westchester chairman, a post he has held since 1979.

Expelled at fund raising

When he succeeded George Clark of Brooklyn as state chairman, Colavita inherited a string of ~~problems during the 1978 gubernatorial election when the party borrowed money to help Assemblyman Perry Duryea, who~~

~~was expelled from the party~~ through fund-raising efforts during his tenure, Colavita ~~has~~ placed the party on the black side of the financial ledger, installed computer-

ized equipment at party headquarters in Albany and established a statewide voter mailing list.

Despite those advances, Colavita has had difficulties convincing major Republicans to run for statewide office in a state where Democrats outnumber Republicans by 1,250,000 voters.

Last year, the party had to wait until late May before Robert McMillan, a relatively unknown attorney from Nassau County, agreed to oppose Democratic Sen. Daniel Patrick Moynihan. The loss of three major county executive seats in 1987—in Suffolk, Monroe and Erie counties—was a blow to the Republican Party, which long has prided itself on controlling areas in the suburbs and upstate.

On the other hand, Colavita was an early supporter of George Bush for president and held the winning margin in New York state by Michael Dukakis to about a quarter million votes despite the fact Bush did not campaign actively for the state.

Whoever succeeds Colavita will have to begin almost immediately to find a challenger for Cuomo, who is expected to seek a third term in 1990 and help Republicans keep their control of the state Senate. If the Democrats control the statehouse and Assembly and Senate, they will have control over redistricting of the state legislative seats after the 1990 census.

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