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Forum: The starting eleven candidates

By Edward L. Marcus

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There are 11 announced candidates running for the Democratic nomination for governor. There are close to that number seeking the Republican nomination.

These brave souls who want to take over the reins of government from Dan Malloy deserve our respect for being willing to get out in the field and play hardball without any of the protective gear worn were they played football or some other sport. Running for public office submits the candidate, particularly on today's market, to a personal scrutiny that will inevitably bench some of the candidates.

On the Democratic side, I see the frontrunners as Joe Ganim, Susan Bysiewicz and Ned Lamont. I see them as the frontrunners because of their recognition factor, having all been a candidate for statewide public office in the past. Some people may have forgotten that Joe Ganim ran for lieutenant governor on the ticket featuring Bill Curry as the Democratic candidate for governor in 1994. Lamont has run three times for statewide office and has won a primary (against Joe Lieberman) and lost a primary (to Dan Malloy in 2010). He lost in the general election to Joe Lieberman despite winning the primary.

Bysiewicz has run successfully for secretary of the state, flirted with running for governor in 2010 and was involved in a political debacle as a candidate for attorney general in 2010, since it turned out that she did not have 10 years of experience as a lawyer, which is a requirement for anyone running for state attorney general.

Joe Ganim is the only Democratic candidate with the experience of successfully running a major city. He has a hard base of political support in Bridgeport and some of its neighboring towns. Ganim also has the advantage of being a current office holder with a track record of success,

fueled by enormous energy and the ability to get a crowd on its feet. His opponents could put out a fire during a fireside speech.

On the Republican side, I see it as a battle of the mayors between Mark Boughton, Erin Stewart and Mark Lauretti. All three have done an outstanding job running their respective communities and I see them as head and shoulders above the other Republican candidates.

One of the problems that occur with a multitude of candidates on both sides is how the respective state party chairs manage their conventions to reduce the inevitable sniping and internecine battling. What can you do to ease the tensions between the different factions?

One way to do it, which I would strongly recommend to both party chairs, is to have only one ballot. If the first ballot does not yield a party nominee then whoever has qualified for a primary will have the right to run in a primary, without their necessarily being an official party nominee. That would level the playing field and reduce tension between the respective party chairman and the candidates. To go through multiple ballots will only exacerbate the warfare between competing factions in the parties, which will last, in some cases, right through Election Day and beyond.

Good luck to all of the candidates. The winners in the primaries will face off in November and there is plenty of time to write about the candidates both before the primaries and after. At the moment, watch the candidates who can generate some excitement, appeal to most likely voters and produce a platform that can be understood without holding a master's degree from Yale.

Edward Marcus is former chairman of the Democrat State Central Committee in Connecticut.