

Atiyeh Vows He's In Governor Race 'To Win'

By DOUG YOCOM
Journal Staff Writer

Shortly before Christmas Victor Atiyeh announced that he is a Republican candidate for governor.

Some people didn't take him seriously, Atiyeh said. They noted that he certainly is a nice guy but questioned whether he was a genuine candidate.

One newspaper said Atiyeh would make a stronger candidate out of Clay Myers, the secretary of state who also wants the Republican nomination for governor.

So comes now Vic Atiyeh with a protest.

"I am not running just to make Clay Myers look good in the primary. Our intention is to win.

"There is a lot of enthusiasm . . . not necessarily enthusiasm from those in the know as they are say-

ing that he is a nice guy but doesn't have a chance. So they are going to hedge. They maybe will give Clay some money and me some money.

"But I think I will prove very shortly that they should join my campaign. I think we are going to win it," he said in an interview.

Why should Oregon voters choose as governor Atiyeh, 50, president of a Portland Oriental rug company and Senate Republican leader?

He lists two reasons.

One is experience. He points to his 15 years in the Legislature. "I have been exposed to people and problems for 15 years," he said.

He is a successful businessman. After his father and uncle started the Atiyeh Bros. rug company in 1900, Victor and two brothers have kept it growing.

A second reason is what Atiyeh calls his "goals." They can be translated into

promising leadership.

"My hope is to give the people of Oregon more confidence and belief in themselves," he said. "We suffer a kind of national inferiority complex. I want to create stability."

Atiyeh is pointing toward an \$80,000 primary campaign. He says he faces a "compressed campaign" so he may go heavy on television advertising at the start. "I will be talking about issues, taking positions," he said.

Born in Portland, Atiyeh was half-way through the University of Oregon when his father died. At age 20, he became president of Atiyeh Bros.

He has been honored by the Syrian-Lebanese American Council as the first of his ethnic group to be elected to the Oregon Legislature. He formerly was commissioner of the Columbia-Pacific Area Council of the Boy

Scouts. A gun and antique collector, he is a member of the National Rifle Association.

The Boy Scout image has stuck to him. He looks brave, clean, courteous and kind, and is. He is prompt in going to legislative committee meetings (most legislators are the opposite). He acts like a man with great dignity and confidence. His worse vice seems to be smoking cigarettes.

The Democratic candidates for governor have been ripping Myers for what they say is a lack of hard positions on issues.

Atiyeh refused to criticize Myers on those grounds. "That's not my kind of campaign," he said.

He may be too nice a guy. With the Republicans finally in a real minority in the state Senate, some Republican muttering was heard about wishing Atiyeh would give the Democrats more

hell and fewer philosophical speeches when partisan issues came up.

Atiyeh has gained a reputation as a conservative although he shies from the term.

"I would say I would be more deliberate than Clay," Atiyeh said. "I am conservative in some areas, liberal in others."

A look at his voting record in the 1973 Legislature may help explain Atiyeh.

He voted against the bill to allow highway funds to be used for mass transit projects, the landlord-tenant law, the Common Cause conflict of interest law, the governor's tax program, the collective bargaining law that allows some employees, such as teachers, to strike, and several planning measures that would strengthen regional governments.

Atiyeh voted for a bill permitting persons age 65 or older to ride free on buses of

mass transit districts during certain hours, for a bill that would close live public sex shows, for a takeover of Multnomah County Hospital by the state and for SB 100, the major land use bill, but only after regional planning power was diluted.

Sometimes it has seemed that Atiyeh was matched against Portland legislators on a certain issue, but the senator who lives in Beaverton and works in Portland says he has not been "anti-Portland or Multnomah County."

He has been outspoken, however, against what he sees as a trend toward non-elective regional government such as the Columbia Region Association of Governments.

"People know where the City Hall in Beaverton is or the Courthouse in Washington County. But I'm not sure they know where to go to visit CRAG.

"All I want to say is that

all problems can't be solved by regional government. I want to signal that this (regionalism) is a trend. Beware. Know that there are some problems that people can solve regionally, but some they can't."

Atiyeh has been critical of land use planning shoved "down the people's throats by the bureaucrats, the Legislature, some city council, county commission or some regional government."

"We have a very deep historical feeling about our land and our right to use our property the way we want.

Most people are conscious that there is a balance between their right to own and maintain their property and what they want with it versus a public right of some kind. I think they recognize this.

"The only way we will get successful land use planning is not to shove it down the people's throats."

He does not favor broadening the powers of regional government and he doesn't see eye to eye with Clay Myers on many land use proposals. He was one of three GOP senators who led an unsuccessful campaign to refer the public employes collective bargaining bill. Property tax relief has been high on Atiyeh's priority list for many years.

Atiyeh works for the things thousands of Oregonians say they believe in but have not been able to find in a gubernatorial candidate for 16 years.

With all of this going for him he probably doesn't stand a chance. The dynamics associated with McCall don't rub off on the sure-footed, fiscal-minded Atiyeh.

Still, it's a tribute to our system that a man of Atiyeh's brains and dedication would take on an office holder who has had six years to plow and sow the political fields.

To use a not too successful slogan, Atiyeh will offer a choice not an echo.

THE OBSERVER

An Independent Newspaper

La Grande, Oregon

Sat., Dec. 29, 1973

Choice not an echo

Something unusual came on to the Oregon political scene last week. A Republican conservative is going to try for the governor's chair.

Even though Clay Myers appears to have one foot and a lot of hopes already in the governor's office, State Sen. Victor Atiyeh is going to make the primary race . . . "win, lose or draw."

If by some miracle the Myers juggernaut spins out and Atiyeh should gain the Republican nomination, Oregon voters would have a choice they haven't had since Elmo Smith faced Robert Holmes back in 1956. A Republican conservative running against a Democratic liberal. (This safely assumes conservative Portland Democrat Frank Ivancie will not be his party's choice.) Leading Democrats, Redden, Roberts, Haas and Straub, all qualify to some degree as liberals.

Think back. Tom McCall ran against Bob Straub twice. McCall swiped Straub's Willamette Greenway plan and found himself in agreement with Straub on far more issues than not. Both were liberal.

Moderate Mark Hatfield faced two liberal candidates, Robert Y. Thornton and Robert Holmes, in winning his two terms as governor.

So, "win, lose or draw," Atiyeh becomes an interesting candidate however briefly he may be around.

Atiyeh is one of those citizen legislators who works hard in Salem so that others can play. He was elected to the House in 1958 and later elevated to the Senate by the voters of Washington County. He served as Senate GOP leader in 1973.

Setting aside Atiyeh's conservative bent for a moment, in all other ways he's the kind of man most voters would be relieved to have in high office. He's intelligent, honest, hard working, a student of taxation, trustworthy, loyal, a dutiful and devoted parent and husband and big in the Boy Scouts.

For a living, he sells fine rugs and carpets just as his family has been doing in the Portland area since the Lewis and Clark Exposition in 1905.