

Common Cause support a key in Davis' effort

September 19, 2013

Jim Yonally's visit to Iola Tuesday came on the eve of Democrat Paul Davis announcing he was entering the 2014 governor's race.

If Davis is to have a chance of unseating Republican Gov. Sam Brownback, he will have to have strong support within the moderate wing of the GOP.

That's where Yonally fits into the equation.

He spent eight years in the Kansas House, two terms in the 1970s and again in 2002-2006.

Nowadays, at age 77, he spends his time encouraging support for the activist group, Traditional Republicans for Common Sense.

Founders are former legislators and a handful of statewide officials, including former lieutenant governors Shelby Smith and Gary Sherrer, who think Kansas is headed in the wrong direction. For local flavor, Iolan Denise Apt, and Bill Otto, Le Roy, are former House members who signed on, as has Tim Emmert, venerable former senator from Independence.

Yonally told the Register the Common Sense consortium had interest in three phases of state government — taxation, education and judicial selection.

"Taxation needs to be equitable and adequate," Yonally said. "We contend the state has neither. Taxes aren't adequate," to deal with education, at all levels, social services programs and most other things that fall within the state's scope of responsibility.

Meanwhile, he said, Kansas tax policy gives huge advantage to the wealthy. It also has shifted responsibility to lower levels of government, cities and counties, which is not tax reduction, he contends, rather redistribution of taxing authority.

Education funding has been cut the past four or five years, Yonally continued, and Common Sense wants to replace what has been taken away. Community colleges, including Allen Community College, have been hurt, he said, leaving resolution of funding needs to increased local property taxes and higher tuition for students.

When Brownback was given opportunity to appoint an Appeals Court judge, it didn't take long to find out what was going to occur, Yonally observed. The governor appointed his counsel and then "didn't let us know who else was considered."

DAVIS, in comments accompanying his official entrance to the gubernatorial race, said Kansans "have a moral obligation to educate our children, reward hard work, build a strong middle class and cooperate with one another."

He criticized cuts to Kansas income tax rates enacted by the Republican-controlled Legislature and Brownback in 2012 and earlier this year, arguing lost revenue would harm education, social services and other essential state services.

When organized moderate Republican viewpoints and Davis' platform are laid side-by-side, they mesh quite well.

That may not portend substantial cross-over vote by all Republicans who feel incompatible with what is occurring in Topeka today, but it would seem to give Davis and his supporters hope of making inroads to that block of voters.

Democratic support alone won't get Davis, a member of the House since 2003, far in a race with Brownback, assuming, as it seems obvious it will, the general election boils down to the two of them. At this point there is no indication serious opposition will

arise against either within their parties.

Unaffiliated voters will have a role, but the key for Davis is bringing aboard disenchanted members of the Republican Party, hence convincing Yonally and his Common Sense proponents to throw their support his way.

DEMOCRATS have called Cedar Home in the past, most recently Kathleen Sebelius, who resigned to join President Obama's administration as secretary of Health and Human Services.

Sebelius was scheduled to be at a Davis reception in Mission Hills today, although her backing may be eroded some by her connection to Obama's health care law, which conservatives contend hasn't found great favor in Kansas.

It would be refreshing to see a genuine race for governor, but if that is to occur, Davis has many more pieces to fit together in his political puzzle than does Brownback.

— Bob Johnson