



50th District seat Dems' Hammon, GOP's Fortner best picks in Aug. 8 primary

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With term limits forcing out state House members after a maximum of six years, it's vital that 50th District voters, who will be replacing Democrat Paula Zelenko, nominate candidates Aug. 8 who could quickly become effective in Lansing.

Therefore, government experience is a key quality to look for, but personality and knowledge picked up in schools and from careers also are important. Republicans and Democrats each have two primary candidates seeking to make the November runoff for this eastern Genesee County seat, and our recommendations are Fred "Mac" Fortner for the former and Ted Hammon for the latter.

Hammon, 57, a former Burton council member and current member of the Genesee County Board of Commissioners, is clearly better prepared for the Legislature than his opponent, Viva Cain, 51, who owns an office design firm. While we would expect Hammon to know more about government structure and policy matters, Cain isn't as up on the issues as we might expect, considering she's entering politics as a candidate at a fairly lofty level.

Hammon has been one of the stronger members of the county board, with a special interest in expanding health care availability for the uninsured. He's also been a supporter of important initiatives, such as creation of the county's Land Bank, which has been removing massive amounts of blight in older areas. If sent to Lansing, it's quite apparent he would work readily with other House members on both sides of the aisle to push programs that might improve the state and Flint-area economies.

In the Republican contest, neither Fortner, 59, nor Michael R. Baysdell, 27, has Hammon's officeholder experience, but as the longtime owner of the Davison Home Bakery, Fortner has had training that perhaps only small business owners acquire. It's not surprising that he wants Lansing to help these kinds of employers through tax cuts and other measures.

Baysdell, while lacking his opponent's practical knowledge and people skills, is very bright and self-assured. Surely, the Davison High School teacher could make a strong contribution in local government as a prelude to seeking higher office.
