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NEVADA VIEWS: Sandoval opts for the status quo

By CHUCK MUTH
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After his election to the presidency in 1980, Ronald Reagan, believing in the axiom that "people are policy," immediately turned to the free-market conservative movement to help pull the country out of Jimmy Carter's recession, high unemployment, 20 percent interest rates and general malaise.

Gov.-elect Rick Scott is traveling down a similar path in Florida.

But so far here in Nevada, Gov.-elect Brian Sandoval is sticking with the status quo, surrounding himself with many of the same people who were captaining the SS Nevada when it hit that economic iceberg three years ago and started taking on water.

In Florida, Gov.-elect Scott has put together a transition team which the Naples News refers to as a "hall of fame of conservative economists."

"Mr. Scott is consulting with the state's conservative think tank: the James Madison Institute," Stephen Moore of Political Diary reports. "Bob McClure, the institute's president, says that top JMI scholars have been tapped for key transition team slots. ... Budget experts from the Heritage Foundation and the Cato Institute will also be consulted."

In addition, Moore reports that among Scott's top priorities are "the elimination of the state's corporate income tax," as well as "pension reform that requires higher contributions from state employees" and "budgets that limit the growth of government spending to the rate of growth of the private sector."

Vunderbar! So shall it be written; so shall it be done.

On the other hand, Gov.-elect Sandoval so far has hired a moderate Republican establishment figure to be his chief of staff, an executive from the state's biggest PR/lobbying firm as his senior adviser, and an anti-school-choice public school official as his Southern Nevada director.

In addition, Sandoval's recently announced 29-member transition team includes a couple of longtime gaming executives, a Mercedes-Benz dealer, a union boss, a "Republicans for Reid" state senator, a founder of a Democrat special interest caucus, two School Board members, one public school bureaucrat, a former Democrat mayor, a former university president, an energy company executive, the water authority czar, an executive from a powerhouse Nevada law firm, the ol' Chamber guy, a former labor commissioner and a mining executive.

Not one readily recognized movement conservative.

Newt Gingrich is fond of saying, and rightly so, that real change requires real change. Which means you don't replace the captain of the Titanic with the captain of the Exxon Valdez.

Nevada's economy, budget and government demand real change. We're not likely to get it from the status quo folks currently filling up the Sandoval administration. The counter-argument is that while

they may not be conservatives, at least they're all "competent."

And we all know how well that worked out for Mike Dukakis, don't we?

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