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Just Keep Those Crime Policy Questionnaires Coming In

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HE EXPECTED QUICK responses to his crime survey. After all, there was little doubt that crime is a campaign issue as gubernatorial hopefuls aimed to out-tough each other with safe-streets and thug-control rhetoric.

Frank Pinter, chairman of the board for the Broward County Crime Commission, sent out the non-partisan survey on crime to all the candidates for governor.

The commission is made up of about 200 members and has a who's-who board of directors weighted with past and present judges, law enforcement officials and community leaders.

They wanted to know where the candidates stood on the death penalty, law enforcement salaries, armed citizens, casino gambling, sentencing guidelines, and the push for a state crime commission.

Two months later, Pinter has received only one response.

"I'm surprised. It's certainly a major issue and one that should be addressed," he said. "I can see two or three getting lost, but not eight."

Pinter's estimate checked out. Two gubernatorial camps have no record of the questionnaires, but the rest plead that time pressures and the volume of organizations seeking candidate views have caused delays in responding to the May 8 letters.

"We have no evidence of the questionnaire," said Virginia Newman, press aide to a Republican candidate, Tampa Mayor Bob Martinez. "We're inundated with questionnaires, and some are 15 to 30 pages long. But we try to do them all."

"We have no record of it, but we'll be happy to fill it out," said Oscar Juarez from the Orlando headquarters of Republican Lou Frey, where questionnaires also are "coming in fast and furious . . . at least 10 a week."

At the headquarters of Democratic candidate Steve Pajcic, press aide Colin Leitch said, "We have it, we've completed it, and we will send it in."

Don Moody, former legislative aide to Sen. Frank Mann and now a member of the Pajcic camp, said Mann did receive the crime commission's questionnaire, but "it had not been completed at the time (Mann) withdrew from the race so it was never sent in." The Fort Myers Democrat is now Pajcic's running mate.

Miami Beach Democrat Barry Kutun also dropped out of the race before returning the survey. Two others can be logged as still-on-the-way.

“I have it in front of me,” said Randy Lewis, press aide to Senate President Harry Johnston, D-West Palm Beach. “It arrived smack in the middle of the (legislative) session. We do them according to the deadlines.”

“We’re definitely going to do it as soon as possible,” said Bill DiPaolo, press aide to Tom Gallagher, R-Coconut Grove.

And the lone respondent to date? If you’ve been keeping track, you know it’s Attorney General Jim Smith, a Democratic candidate.

Pinter said the group probably will wait until after the September primary and invite the winners from each party to talk about the crime issue. And if you’re running for attorney general, watch your mail. Pinter said the commission probably will send out the same questionnaire to each of you.

THE STATIONERY IS printed and the hat in the ring for Joan Berni. The former social-service agency executive has decided to join the already crowded race in state Senate District 30.

“I’m going to do it,” said Berni, who will run on the Democratic ticket. The longtime Fort Lauderdale resident has promised to raise some of the critical community issues she saw from the vantage point of the less fortunate during her 18 years with the Broward office of the state Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services.

Campaign treasurer and all-purpose helper will be Barbara Sterry, another of the top HRS officials who abandoned long careers out of frustration.

Other Democratic candidates expected to file officially for the office this week are incumbent Sen. Tom McPherson, Fort Lauderdale, and Rep. Tom Armstrong, Plantation. The victor probably will face Fort Lauderdale Republican Mayor Rob Dressler in the November election.