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New Haven mayoral challenger picks up another ward endorsement

Published: Tuesday, July 26, 2011



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NEW HAVEN — Another mayoral challenger has picked up a Democratic ward endorsement.

Budget watchdog Jeffrey Kerekes won the endorsement of Ward 8 in Wooster Square on Monday, the night before this evening's Democratic Town Committee nominating convention.

Mayor John DeStefano Jr. is expected to win the full committee's nomination today, but challengers say the fact that they are picking up ward endorsements is a sign of discontent with current leadership.

"The fact that ward committees are actively defecting is a great sign of a more broad trend of support," Kerekes said in a statement today.

Kerekes won endorsements in Wards 8 and 10.

Fellow Democratic mayoral challengers Clifton Graves Jr. and Anthony Dawson have picked up one ward endorsement each: Graves in Ward 28 and Dawson in Ward 3.

Also, Graves has announced that he will boycott tonight's nominating convention. He said that while he respects members of the Democratic Town Committee and is grateful for the endorsement from Ward 28, he will not attend the convention.

"The reason for the boycott is simply because the process itself is flawed and I think it's skewed toward the incumbent, in this case John DeStefano," Graves said on Monday.

Former Alderman Robert Lee, another Democrat, also is seeking the nomination.

The committee is holding its nominating convention at 6 p.m. tonight at King Robinson Magnet School, 150 Fournier St. Democrats will pick their choice for mayor, city clerk and aldermen.

Formal endorsements for aldermen also will be made that night. Wards have been holding meetings for weeks to pick candidates for aldermen.

With numerous incumbents leaving and a unified union campaign effort, there could be a board shake-up, insiders say.

After tonight nominating convention, all candidates have until Aug. 8 to get signatures to force a primary. Aldermanic candidates must get 5 percent of registered Democrats in their ward to qualify; mayoral candidates must get 5 percent of Democrats citywide.

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