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Winter decides against run for DA in Niagara as Wojtaszek seeks 'all lines'

BY: [Thomas J. Prohaska \(mailto:tprohaska@buffnews.com\)](mailto:tprohaska@buffnews.com)

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LOCKPORT – Ronald J. Winter, who has been considering becoming a candidate for Niagara County district attorney, has decided against running, County Republican Chairman Scott P. Kiedrowski said Monday.

The decision could clear the way for a potential cross-endorsement of Caroline A. Wojtaszek by the GOP, although Kiedrowski said he hasn't received a letter from her seeking the nod.

He won't have long to wait.

"I do intend to seek, frankly, all the lines," Wojtaszek said Monday. She is a registered Democrat, but her marriage to a Republican leader, former County Republican Chairman Henry F. Wojtaszek, has made her an object of suspicion at Democratic headquarters.

County Democratic Chairman Nicholas J. Forster has been looking to other potential candidates, but Wojtaszek said Monday that she has been talking with other Democrats and trying to find a way to obtain that party's endorsement.

"My goal is to get in front of the executive committee," Wojtaszek said. "I've been a Democrat since I was old enough to vote."

To those who may regard her as a DINO, or Democrat in Name Only, she said, "I want to meet with the Democratic Party and tell them that's not true."

Forster did not respond to a request for comment Monday.

Winter, a former prosecutor who is confidential law clerk to State Supreme Court Justice Richard C. Kloch Sr., had expressed interest in the GOP endorsement but changed his mind over the weekend.

"He had met with family and friends," Kiedrowski said. "I think Ron would have been an outstanding candidate for the position."

Winter is the brother of Richard Winter, a longtime political associate of former State Sen. George D. Maziarz, long the top Republican politician in Niagara County.

Wojtaszek said, "I worked with Ron Winter for many, many years. I respect him and I respect his decision not to run."

Winter did not return calls seeking comment Monday.

Kiedrowski said the GOP executive committee will meet in several weeks to decide whom to endorse. "We'll have a very lengthy and in-depth discussion with all those who send in correspondence," he said.

As a registered Democrat, Wojtaszek is free to run in a Democratic primary if she can file enough valid nominating petition signatures, but any other party's leaders would have to give her formal permission to run in their parties' primary election, regardless of how many signatures she files on petitions for those lines.

She already has the endorsement of the Niagara County Independence Party.

Meanwhile, Brian D. Seaman, a former prosecutor now in private law practice in Lockport, said Monday that he still has some interest in pursuing the Republican endorsement. He said he intends to confer with some associates and make a decision soon.

email: tprohaska@buffnews.com

Thomas J. Prohaska

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