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Packwood, AuCoin campaigns differ

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WASHINGTON — Republican Sen. Bob Packwood and rival Democratic Rep. Les AuCoin return to Oregon this week with contrasting campaign styles and radically different outlooks on the public's view of incumbents.

A year away from his re-election bid, Packwood said the anti-incumbency mood is so strong that Harry Lonsdale could have been an appealing contender as a third-party candidate had he not opted for the Democratic primary against AuCoin.

"It's clearly there. That is why secretly I am glad that Harry Lonsdale is not running as an independent," he said about the millionaire who gave Republican Sen. Mark Hatfield a surprisingly close race in 1990.

"He would draw as many Republican votes as Democrats, and I could see a three-way race between Les and Harry and myself where Harry would just point his finger at us and say, 'Them is the problem.' And that would have a tremendous appeal," Packwood said.

The 23-year senator refuses to say much more about either AuCoin or Lonsdale, however. He said he's concentrating only on his own primary challenge from Joe Lutz, who won nearly 43 percent of the vote as an anti-abortion candidate against Packwood in 1986.

AuCoin, on the other hand, said that from day one he has been running against Packwood, not Lonsdale.

In an interview, the Democratic congressman unleashed a series of attacks on Packwood, blaming him for contributing to the nation's economic ills and accusing him of exploiting the Northwest timber crisis for political gain.

"We're going to take Bob Packwood to task for the biggest sin of all: abandoning Oregon's middle-class and working families," AuCoin said.

"This is a man who never lifted a finger to provide assistance to



Bob Packwood

people who live in the woods until his re-election seemed imperiled," he said.

"His fingerprints are all over the budget transfers of resources from people programs to the military complex throughout the 1980s and all of the tax changes that have left working families worse off than they were in the 1970s."

AuCoin, who was elected in 1974, thinks he will be able to beat the incumbency rap but Packwood will not.

"People do feel a need for change and they are damned mad with the direction things have been going," AuCoin said.

"But they are looking for an agent of change, who knows what to do to effect change. They look for those who have been pointing an alternative course but who have been outvoted. That's what I'm about.

"The choice I'll pose is an alternative to business as usual where the priorities of the government have been the junk bond-dealers, the corporate raiders, the high-steppers on Wall Street instead of kids in need of education and workers in need of retraining."

AuCoin said the mood that Packwood has interpreted as anti-



Les AuCoin

incumbent is actually anti-Packwood.

"I have changed my fair-grounds, handshaking mantra," AuCoin said. "Instead of saying, 'I'm Les AuCoin, I'm running for the Senate,' I now say, 'I'm Les AuCoin, I'm running against Bob Packwood for the Senate.' It's much more effective."

Packwood doesn't think AuCoin can shed the incumbency tag so easily.

"I'm not sure Congressman AuCoin or I can hide the fact that we have been here a long period of time," Packwood said.

"You hope you can stand above it. You hope you can say to the voters, 'No matter how mad you may feel, do you think I am responsible or that I have been able to help you, help Oregon?'"

Packwood, ranking Republican on the Senate Finance Committee, said his campaign will emphasize that his experience and seniority in the Senate make him the best choice for Oregon's future.

He will focus on health care reforms, jobs and the Endangered Species Act. He wants to alter the act so economics play a larger role.

"Are we going to make a choice where the birds get preference or

do people and birds count equally?" Packwood asked.

The senator said he won't discuss AuCoin's views because he doesn't know whether AuCoin will hold off Lonsdale in the primary.

"It's just a totally different campaign depending on which one you are running against," Packwood said.

"Congressman AuCoin is an insider who will have been here for close to 20 years. He voted for many of the same things I voted for. That's one thing. It's another to run against someone who hasn't been here and says, 'It's not my fault,' and points his finger, but has no record to defend," he said.

But AuCoin said Packwood refuses to compare their views because the senator fears defeat.

"The fewer questions he has to answer about the guy he is going to meet in the general election, the better off he will be. But he can hear my footsteps very clearly. That is why he is not uttering my name," AuCoin said.

"The polls show this is one of the closest races in the country. He knows that. Republican senators from the West have told me that they know that," he said.

"People have figured him out. He has tried to be all things to all people. Who Bob Packwood was yesterday is not who Bob Packwood is today and people doubt very much they know who he will be tomorrow," AuCoin said.

Packwood won't respond. He said he doesn't want to be accused of negative campaigning.

"There's no point in it because I'm not sure he's going to be the nominee. I just want to stay away from any kind of even negative inferences," the senator said.

AuCoin doesn't believe it.

"You write those words down and chisel them in marble, because I promise you immediately after the primary and certainly by next fall, you will find Bob Packwood running a scorched earth negative campaign against me."

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