

Brady says he has the experience and contacts to run city

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STAFF WRITER

In Philadelphia's race for mayor plenty of fixes are being pitched to cure what ails the city, Democratic candidate U.S. Rep. Bob Brady said.

When the dust clears it will still take money — money from the city, money from the state and money from the federal government — which no one can get better than he can, Brady said, in outlining his objectives as mayor to editors and reporters at the Philadelphia Business Journal.

With 35 years of politics under his belt, those who have crossed Brady's path serve as a who's who of contacts, including city employees, City Council members, state legislators and federal lawmakers, Brady said. In getting what the city needs, Brady said, he can tap them more effectively than anyone else.

"The way we are right now this city needs to heal, there are too many going across that bridge," said Brady from the Business Journal's office overlooking the Benjamin Franklin Bridge into New Jersey.

Among factors working against Philadelphia are its business-privilege tax, complicated permitting processes, unfriendly



CURT HUDSON

Rep. Bob Brady: 'City needs to heal.'

city employees and the difficulty in doing business, Brady said.

As mayor, Brady would seek to usher in more predictable zoning laws, consolidate city departments to provide one-stop services to businesses and eventually rid the city of the business privilege tax, which taxes a business whether it turns a profit or not, he said. Under his plan, the gross receipts portion of the business privilege tax (currently 0.154 percent) would be phased out over eight years and the net income portion (currently 6.5 percent) would be eliminated by 2020.

Brady's plan for a better Philadelphia would also include city employees who are friendly, helpful and answer the phone promptly. He says the city's many policing

UP CLOSE

NAME: Bob Brady

AGE: 61

TITLE: U.S. representative to Congress

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE: U.S. House of Representatives, 1998-present; chair, Philadelphia Democratic Party 1986-present; 34th ward leader, 1967-present; Philadelphia deputy mayor for labor, 1984-87; sergeant-at-arms, Philadelphia City Council, 1975-1983; Pennsylvania Turnpike commissioner; has taught organization dynamics at the University of Pennsylvania for the past decade.

EDUCATION: St. Thomas More High School. Graduated from a four-year carpenters apprenticeship program.

HOMETOWN: Philadelphia

CURRENT HOME: Philadelphia

departments should be better able to communicate with each other. As it stands now if there was a problem on SEPTA's Market-Frankford El, which runs underground at some points, SEPTA could only communicate directly with its own police, Brady said.

In lessening the city's burden, Brady would examine the operations of SEPTA, as well as the Philadelphia Gas Works and the Philadelphia International Airport, which he charged with being "top heavy."

Brady, who's been employed as a carpenter and is a union member, credited

the city's unions with having the manpower and skills to face whatever development demands are placed on them, although more diversity is needed among their ranks, he said.

He bristled at the suggestion that his connections with labor could help him get concessions from unions, saying rather that the unions and the city need to work together.

The city's next mayor will step into office facing negotiations with the city's four major bargaining units, whose contracts are all set to expire June 30, 2008. Brady, who helped end a SEPTA strike that had dragged on for 40 days, said he is prepared.

"My strong suit is putting everyone in the same room," Brady said of his negotiating skills.

In leading Philadelphia, Ed Rendell, now governor, has been pegged as a mayor for Center City and Mayor John F. Street, as a mayor for the neighborhoods. Brady said he would like to become a mayor for everybody, one that leaves a better city behind when he's gone.

The mayoral primary will be held May 15. In addition to Brady, former City Councilman Michael A. Nutter, state Rep. Dwight Evans, U.S. Rep. Chaka Fattah and Al Taubenberg, president of the Greater Northeast Philadelphia Chamber of Commerce and the only Republican in the race, have declared their candidacies.

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