

The Long Haul for H.

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H. Spees is fresh off announcing his bid for Mayor of Fresno, making him the second announced candidate in what is expected to be a fairly small field.

Despite the fact that his announcement was much ballyhooed and artificially pumped up with strange fanfare on a holiday night, its time for a reality check on Spees 2016.

Three daunting issues face Spees in his pursuit for Mayor:

He's splitting North Fresno (and Republicans)

H. Spees, a political acolyte of former Fresno Mayor Alan Autry, will face off against a current right-leaning officeholder: Lee Brand.

He's spitting North Fresno

Back in late spring, Mayor Ashley Swearengin remarked that Fresno's blight line had moved from Shaw Avenue to Herndon. While she was largely off-the-mark with respect to the city's chronic blight, she might've had a point when it came to voting.

The highest propensity voters in Fresno live roughly at or north of Herndon Avenue. In races that capture the entire county (such as Sheriff, District Attorney, and statewide offices), the area with the highest propensity voters is the second supervisorial district (represented by Andreas Borgeas). Those voters contribute to a disproportionate turnout model for elections.

It also explains how Swearengin, a relative unknown in 2008, bested Henry T. Perea – favorite son of a major Democratic political family. Even in a historically high turnout year for Democrats, Fresno's high propensity voters in north Fresno delivered for Swearengin.

Underlying the "high propensity voter" tag in north Fresno is the fact that, most of these voters are Republican. Despite national success, Valley Democrats have struggled to leverage their voter registration advantage into turnout that will decide a close election.

Dropping the pretense that the Mayor's race is nonpartisan, the fact is: people are looking for ideological matches. Spees and Brand draw from the same well: Republicans. Spees, unlike Brand, can tap into social conservatives more readily.

But unlike the Presidential contest, social conservatives still vote with their pocketbook, almost negating Spees' edge.

Comparatively, he'll be underfunded

Lee Brand, a tremendously successful businessman, enters the race with the immediate cash advantage. Unlike every other candidate, he has a preexisting campaign committee with \$145,000 in funds from his reelection in 2012.

While he can't fundraise for this race until the filing window for city offices opens, Brand's multi-year quest to consolidate support means that he has more than a few of pledges of support to bank on.

At the outset, Spees is hanging his hat on support from Autry – something he would have had in 2003 had he decided

to pursue the office (and Autry hadn't run).

A lot has changed since 2003.

Namely, Autry's standing as a political figure cratered as the city plunged into the depths of the Great Recession with crippling debt in 2008. He followed that act up by signing on a lobbying push to support California's high-speed rail system long after it became clear that voters were sold a bill of goods.

Turning his marquee endorsement from Autry into a sizable fundraising operation to compete with Brand and others will undoubtedly be a difficult pitch.

He'll be crowded out quickly

Spees lucked out by the timing of his announcement: largely ahead of the curve of the other big names. Brand, his only current official rival for the job, has been running for Mayor like it were a marathon.

Should Perea decide to jump into the race – something that has been in doubt for weeks – Spees would undoubtedly find himself bounced out of November and reaching a third place showing, as Perea would capture a wide swath of Democrats in June.

And if Dyer joins Perea in joining the race, there's a fair argument that the June Primary is a battle for second – with Dyer eating up broad-based support.

In that event, Brand's funding advantage would put him in a prime position over Perea and Spees.

But the scenarios where Spees escapes the June thrasher can be narrowed down to one: a mano-a-mano battle with Brand.

And the chances of that happening are as roughly equal to a politicians eschewing a photo-op.

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