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Shannon for A.G.

Shannon for attorney general

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IT'S A SIGN that Ole Virginny-- its good and its bad--is just a fading memory that two fellows whose ethnicities suggest a contest for, oh, mayor of Philly are instead running for state attorney general. Irish Catholic Steve Shannon is challenging Italian Catholic Ken Cuccinelli in this former WASP hive, where not so long ago Methodists were thought exotic.

Both Mr. Cuccinelli, a GOP state senator, and Mr. Shannon, a Democratic delegate, hail from Fairfax County, a cosmopolitan welter of human types and new ways that is becoming the paradigm for the state at large. But one seems more on top of the challenges of modernity in its Virginia incarnation.

For most of his career, Mr. Shannon, 38, has protected children from the despicable criminals who exploit the blind spots of a mobile, techno-chaotic society. Just after finishing U.Va. Law School, Mr. Shannon and his wife brought the then-new idea of the anti-kidnapping Amber Alert to the Washington metro area and arduously sold it to skeptical authorities. As a Fairfax prosecutor, Mr. Shannon zeroed in on child molesters. Today--yes, we mean right now--he can tell you exactly how many computerized kiddie-porn transactions took place in Virginia yesterday. (Smile, pervie, you're on Candid Keystroke.) He can speak knowledgeably about gang violence, cropping up even in Virginia's boonies, and his prosecutorial and legislative record glitters with efforts to shield consumers from fraud.

Mr. Cuccinelli, while not without virtues--he has worked for government transparency, post-Kelo property rights, and other checks on state overreach--is subject to disconcerting enthusiasms. His bill to push Congress to deny citizenship to the kids of illegal immigrants is the sort of idea that jollies only the least tolerant Virginians, and another failed measure, making criminals of journalists who knocked on the doors of mourners, is further evidence of Mr. Cuccinelli's vulnerability to ad hominem temptations.

Mr. Shannon, in short, strikes us as more temperate and more adaptable to the realities of social change. We endorse him for attorney general.

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