

Keith Butler Declares Candidacy for 2006 Senate Race

Detroit pastor Keith Butler announced April 12 that he will run for U.S. Senate in Michigan's 2006 election.

"With all that I have seen, heard and felt in my soul, running for the United States Senate at this time and place in Michigan's history is not a mere opportunity," said Butler, founding pastor and bishop of 21,000-member Word of Faith International Christian Center, the Associated Press (AP) reported. "It is something much more important: a responsibility."

A longtime Republican and former Detroit city councilman, Butler said he believed he had a moral obligation to oppose Democratic Sen. Debbie Stabenow, citing such issues as gay marriage and challenges to religious freedom as motivation for his run, the AP said.

Republican state Sen. Alan Cropsey is endorsing Butler and said he believes his chances of winning are strong, though the primary will likely be a tough race. "He's a staunch conservative on fiscal issues; he's a staunch conservative on moral issues," Cropsey said. "But he's more than a conservative. He's a spokesman. He's a leader."

Butler is not as well known among Michigan Republicans outside the Detroit area, and Cropsey said white conservatives might not immediately see why they should vote for a black man from

a densely urban part of the state. But he says Butler will win their support when they realize he shares their values. They also will likely be impressed with his business acumen, Cropsey said, as Butler has built the state's largest church, which has 15 branches in the U.S. and abroad.

He added that Christian voters—a block that Cropsey said “will swing any [Republican] primary”—likely will not be deterred by Butler's affiliation with the Word-Faith movement. “I take a look at Keith Butler, and I say, ‘This man holds my values. On the key issues, this man believes as I believe,’” said Cropsey, a Christian who has known Butler since the early 1980s. “I may disagree on some of the charismatic issues, but I know this is a man of God.”

Observers say if Butler wins the Republican primary, he could unseat Stabenow if he gains the typical percentage of Republican votes and at least 20 percent of the black vote. Butler supporters from Cropsey to Traditional Values Coalition founder Lou Sheldon to former National Religious Broadcasters chairman Glenn Plummer say he could win at least that percentage.

Cropsey said he believes Butler is called to this race. “In my spirit I sense there is a strong anointing from God on Keith Butler,” he said.

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