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To which side will it look to in dealing with northeast Ohio's Black community?

Will it look the Republican controlled agle to the African American community, as personally delivered by the state Spe The arrows or the olive branch?

By almost all measures of political gauging, Ohio's new Republican Governor John Kasich and Ohio's Black politicians, and thus their constituency, have been at odds from day one. With the Cleveland area, a long-standing stronghold of Black representation, an impending four-year struggle with the Republican-led statehouse loomed foreboding on the Lake Erie landscape with the education of area children, small and big business commerce, social programs and, of course, political structure to be determined.

It would seem that an olive branch has been extended to Cleveland's African American community, personally delivered by the state Speaker of the House William Batchelder to the Call and Post newspaper.

Embarking on a mini-goodwill tour, the speaker's first stop was candid sit-down with the Call and Post's editorial board. Both sides were honest and forthcoming about real and understandable points of view.

On various issues concerning this area's Black community, Batchelder was receptive and knowledgeable to the proposed points up for discussion. While the speaker certainly put out a call that talented Black Republicans should be sent his way for much needed "red state" leadership planning in these parts, he was well aware of the historical political ground of Democratic representation that this area is known for.

With over 30 years invested into state politics, Batchelder knows the players on both sides of the aisle and is well versed in the importance of Cleveland in addition to what it can and should mean to Ohio jobs, commerce, and prosperity.

If it was the governors' intent to modify the tone and tenor of his message to Black Ohioans, the voluntary arrival of the state speaker to these parts was an acceptable introduction. The governors' acknowledgement of what happens in Northeastern Ohio, also being meaningful, is a hopeful beginning to working out a best case scenario in the midst of this state's intricate political scenery.

Batchelder spoke about the state capitol's outreach into Cleveland on several fronts but the speaker didn't show up at our doorsteps with only a big bag of sunshine. He was steadfast that tough decisions are being made on the state level due to deficits and budget-cutting concerns.

Taking in a meeting with elected city officials, faith-based leadership and various community representatives, Batchelder spoke of his personal reverence for this area and his commitment to seeing it prosper.

Thus far, we look forward to significant follow-up on behalf of this community and our concerns. If that occurs, this meeting can be seen as a good first step.