

THE PLAIN DEALER

Former Ohio Gov. Ted Strickland starts consulting firm with many of his top advisers

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By Reginald Fields

COLUMBUS, Ohio -- Former Ohio Gov. [Ted Strickland](#) has a new job. The Democratic leader will head a start-up consulting firm with offices in Columbus and Washington, D.C. that will focus on business expansion opportunities and political campaigns.

Midwest Gateway Partners will feature Strickland and several of his top advisers during his stint as governor from 2007 through 2010, including Chief of Staff [John Haseley](#) and political consultant Aaron Pickrell, who ran Strickland's 2006 and 2010 gubernatorial campaigns.

The group also will include consultant Sandy Theis, a former journalist and Plain Dealer Statehouse bureau chief who worked on Strickland's campaign last year; Mark Shanahan, the governor's former energy adviser; and Steve Ricchetti, a Washington-based consultant and Cleveland native who worked at the White House under former President Bill Clinton.

Strickland said his primary goal with the new group is to focus on economic development and job creation, pretty much the same items that current Gov. John Kasich, who defeated Strickland last November, has listed as his top priorities.

"Economic development and job creation consumed most of my time when I was in office and so I didn't just lose those interests when I left office," Strickland told The Plain Dealer. "I continue to have concerns about economic growth and job creation and this will enable me to utilize the talents of people I really respect a lot."

Strickland said that while he does not agree with the direction Kasich has taken the state in his first seven months of office, he is not trying to compete against anything the Republican governor is doing.

"I have been sometimes critical of some of the things (Kasich) has done but this is not a political entity or wasn't created for a political purpose. That's not what this partnership is about," Strickland said. "There will be times when maybe there will be a lot of compatibility between what we want to encounter and do and what the governor perceives to be the best thing for Ohio's interest."

Strickland said the partnership was not formed to get involved with advocating for the repeal of Senate Bill 5 or keeping the federal healthcare program in place in Ohio. However, Strickland said as an individual he will support repealing the new collective bargaining law and keeping the healthcare provisions. Both those issues will be on the ballot this fall for voters to decide.

Since leaving office, Strickland has helped start a new left-leaning think tank, Innovation Ohio, and had been rumored to be under consideration for several national positions both under current President Barack Obama's administration and with the Democratic party.

Original Article:

http://www.cleveland.com/open/index.ssf/2011/07/former_ohio_gov_ted_strickland.html