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# Interim Leader and Novice to Face Off in Detroit Race

By NICK BUNKLEY  
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DETROIT — Dave Bing, a political novice, played nine seasons for the Detroit Pistons, was elected to pro basketball's Hall of Fame and went on to run a well-known and successful automotive parts supplier in the city.

Enlarge This Image



Left, Rebecca Cook/Reuters; right, Carlos Osorio/Associated Press

Dave Bing, left, is a former basketball player and a businessman. Kenneth V. Cockrel Jr. entered city politics in 1997.

[Kenneth V. Cockrel Jr.](#) has spent most his life surrounded by politics. The son of a well-known activist lawyer, he was president of the City Council before replacing Mayor [Kwame Kilpatrick](#) after Mr. Kilpatrick resigned and served jail time for lying to cover up an affair he was having with his chief of staff.

Now, Mr. Bing and Mr. Cockrel will face off in a special election in May to determine who will serve the remaining eight months of Mr. Kilpatrick's term.

The two men were the top vote-getters among a field of 15 candidates in a nonpartisan primary Tuesday.

Mr. Bing, who received 29 percent of the vote, often describes himself as the only candidate who has actually created jobs in Detroit, with the Bing Group, the company he has run for 28 years.

"We've always had career politicians leading the city, and that's one of the reasons we're where we are," Mr. Bing, 65, said in an interview Wednesday.

Mr. Cockrel, 43, who got 27 percent, is not truly a career politician, having worked as a newspaper reporter before becoming the youngest person ever elected to the City Council in 1997.

His campaign advertisements, though, boasted of his "taking office in the midst of crisis" and "getting our city back on track."

Mr. Bing could benefit from widespread frustration with Mr. Kilpatrick, who stepped down in September, and other members of the City Council.

At the same time, Mr. Bing is trying to fend off the notion that he is a carpetbagger, an accusation made directly by Mr. Cockrel. Until late last year, Mr. Bing lived in the exclusive suburb of Franklin, where his wife still lives.

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In Wednesday's Detroit Free Press, Mr. Cockrel was quoted as saying, "There are no iron gates dividing me from the people I live with and the community I live in."

"Money can't buy you a record of public service," he added. "Money can't buy you the knowledge to turn this city around."

Mr. Bing counters such criticism by saying he has always been committed to Detroit, unlike business owners who fled to suburban industrial parks and residents who sought more appealing locales.

"I've stayed here my entire career, my adult life," Mr. Bing said in the interview. "I surely had options. I can live anywhere I want to live, but I choose to be in Detroit and I choose to help Detroit come back to its greatness."


Neither candidate can be considered the favorite, said Victoria Mantzopoulos, chairwoman of the political science department at the University of Detroit Mercy. Turnout was so low Tuesday — less than 15 percent — that Mr. Bing's total represents just 4 percent of registered voters.

"It's a critical election," Ms. Mantzopoulos said, "and Bing certainly has a lot to overcome with Cockrel being interim mayor."

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