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The race for State Attorney General

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NORFOLK, Va. - Five weeks from now Virginians will decide who leads the Commonwealth. And while much of the focus is on the gubernatorial race, we're also electing Virginia's "top cop": The Attorney General.

Both candidates are in the General Assembly, are lawyers, and are from Northern Virginia. Democrat Steve Shannon, a member of the House Of Delegates, is a former prosecutor and Republican Ken Cuccinelli is a State Senator who runs his own law firm.

Del. Steve Shannon's commercial says, "When a child is abducted the first few hours are the most important." The ad then goes on to say how Shannon and his wife started the Amber Alert in Northern Virginia. On the phone Tuesday, Shannon touted how he received the Fairfax Chamber of Commerce endorsement over Cuccinelli. There was also a member of the Chamber Political Pac that said Shannon was better at pushing the issues important to the chamber.

"I have leadership experience...I've been a prosecutor...I've pushed for public safety and keeping kids safe and keeping them out of gangs," Shannon said.

Republican State Senator Ken Cuccinelli is a defense attorney who is credited with solving a legal imbalance Virginia found herself in. During the summer, the U.S. Supreme Court handed down a ruling that would require felony drug cases be thrown out due to courtroom testimony.

"I reached across party lines, helped get a special session of the General Assembly and we changed the law so those drug cases can be tried," Cuccinelli told WAVY.com. Cuccinelli also won the endorsement of the Fraternal Order of Police.

Steve Shannon is the only one who has been a prosecutor and his ad now running on WAVY-TV states: "As a prosecutor Steve Shannon sent drunk drivers to jail, and sexual predators and child molesters to prison." Shannon told WAVY.com, "I've been in the courtroom. I'm experienced to make Virginia safer, and to make it a better place to call home."

Cuccinelli is making mental health a top priority in the wake of the Virginia Tech shootings. He is pushing for community outreach programs instead of institutionalization.

"We need to get to the folks in need earlier in the deterioration process. We have to do this when it's easier for us to get to them, so they can take care of themselves again," Cuccinelli said.

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