MA Senatorial Primary: Who Gets My vote?

I've been impressed with Michael Capuano's record, his forthright rejection of the war in Afghanistan, his progressive stance on health insurance reform, and his staunch support of Massachusetts' biotechnology industry.

But all running in today's Democratic Senatorial Primary—Michael Capuano, Martha Coakley, Alan Khazei, and Steve Pagliuca —have great backgrounds and are outstanding progressive candidates.

Khazei, a Harvard grad, founded the grassroots nonprofit City Year; Pagliuca, a Celtics co-owner, built a lucrative career in business consulting; Coakley and Capuano are both established public servants—with Coakley elected to Massachusetts Attorney General, and Capuano having spent years as Somerville's mayor.

All favor abortion rights (against the Catholic Church of which all but Pagliuca—an Episcopalian— not that I care) are members). All favor the Obama health insurance legislation—tho Coakley and Capuano have said they'd vote against any bill ruling out out abortion funding.

On last Monday's *Greater Boston*, on Channel 2, host Emily Rooney struggled to get the candidates to differentiate their positions on major issues.

Capuano seemed most adamantly opposed to prolonging the war in Afghanistan, suggesting that the American mission there, of routing out Al Khaida terrorists, has been accomplished.

Khazei tried to articulate a complex program of economic reform.

Pagliuca focused on the need for job creation but had difficulty, when grilled, about whether he had suffered as a result of the current recession (I don't understand why he was singled out on this point, when everyone already knows he's a successful businessman). .

Coakley has made it clear that she's a peoples' candidate—who would readily take on Wall Street cheats. She came out well when *her* economic acumen was called into question. (Supposedly, she has only $12,000 in savings—she explained that always been a public servant who is not in it for the money but she's not stupid; her funds must be in trust or in the name of her husband, who is a retired Cambridge cop). .

So—how are we to choose? If not by positions on the issues, is it by background, knowledge, personality or style?

Khazei comes across as earnest, softspoken, a nice guy, smart, well-reasoned, a Harvard grad with nonprofit background, who, from my perspective, also seems amateurish, and a little bit of an "itch." (Whose idea was that TV ad featuring babies with adult voices in which Khazei evidently changes a diaper, then holds it up saying, "Someone's got to clean up the mess in Washington?" Gross!)

Pagliuca is smart, but does not seem comfortable or convincing in his proposed political role. (There's that strange ad in which he says he really wanted to be a teacher but by somehow—by mistake?— fell into a lucrative career in business consulting). I believe he understands the economy and would do well in a position that involved creating businesses and jobs— but that he'd face a large learning curve on the national, policymaking stage.

Capuano is impressive, brilliant, outspoken, in an up-by-the bootstraps sort of way. His ads are geared toward an ultra-liberal, antiwar audience of Cambridge/Somerville liberals—but do they address the concerns of others across the

state?

At the start of Greater Boston, I was in his camp—but when he called Pagliuca on the carpet, saying "Steve, you have to read the bill," he seemed like an arrogant know-it-all with a humiliating style. While some believe his feisty manner would bring fresh air into a Senate filled with windbags, I question whether he has the respect for others and the statesmanship needed to get things done.

That Monday night, Coakley hung back, listening, staying out of the fray, coming in to sum up, makin intelligent points. She's been an elected official, taken unpopular stands. I disagree with her vow to vote against health reform legislation that includes an abortion ban, but believe she's got much needed practical, statewide experience in enforcing laws, and in taking difficult stands. I find her ads about growing up in Western MA tasteful and convincing, and those who know her say she has a firm, but compassionate hand.

I've not studied the Republican field because it's so clear that one of the above will certainly win—and, given the similarity of the Democrats positions on the issues, I'd be happy with any of them.

In voting, this time around, I'll be deciding based on which candidate has the background and talent to hit the ground running—to effectively translate ideas into action with credibility and sophistication at a time when so many major issues are at stake.

The polls are about to open— gotta go. Coakley's got vote.