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Fullwood misses candidate qualifying deadline

Margie Menzel, The News Service of Florida

The weeklong qualifying period for Florida candidates in this year's races ended with a surprise when Rep. [Reggie Fullwood](#), D-Jacksonville, missed the deadline due to a notary public's error.

State candidates were required to qualify by noon Friday for the 2014 races, with the primaries scheduled for Aug. 26 and the general election set for Nov. 4.

Fullwood was running unopposed in House District 13, which means a new special qualifying period for the Duval County seat will be set by the state Division of Elections.

"It's an honest mistake," Fullwood said. "I'm fortunate no one else was running."

Actually, Fullwood said, two notaries made errors with his paperwork. He filed most of his documents on Thursday, including a check for his qualifying fee of \$1,781.82. But the first notary had made an error on his financial disclosure form.

Fullwood said the Florida Democratic Party arranged for a second notary to redo the form and take it to the Division of Elections office, but she failed to check a required box at the bottom. By the time Fullwood learned of the error, he was back in Jacksonville with ten minutes to go before the deadline.

"I could have gotten my documents in earlier," he said. "We'll get it right this time --- we'll literally make sure the boxes are checked."

Meanwhile, the best-known gubernatorial candidates qualified early, including Republican Gov. Rick Scott, former Gov. Charlie Crist and former Senate Minority Leader Nan Rich, who will face Crist in the Democratic primary.

Also qualifying for the governor's race were Libertarian candidate Adrian Wylie of Palm Harbor and two Republican challengers for Scott: Yinka Abosede Adeshina of Tallahassee and Elizabeth Cuevas-Neunder of Sarasota --- although questionable information about Adeshina's contributions have drawn scrutiny from media organizations.

In all, 16 candidates qualified for the governor's race, mostly write-ins or those with no party affiliation.

The three incumbent Republican Cabinet members --- Attorney General Pam Bondi, Chief Financial Officer Jeff Atwater and Agriculture Commissioner Adam Putnam --- qualified early as well.

Bondi has drawn two Democratic opponents, former Department of Children and Families Secretary George Sheldon and House Minority Leader Perry Thurston, along with Libertarian candidate Bill Wohlsifer. Bondi holds a huge fundraising edge over the others, collecting about \$1.3 million as of May 31, while Sheldon raised \$235,428, Thurston brought in \$137,081, and Wohlsifer raised \$9,045.

Atwater also drew a challenger, Deerfield Beach Democrat William "Will" Rankin. Rankin had raised \$13,055 as of May 31, while Atwater had pulled in nearly \$1.9 million.

Running against Putnam are a Democrat, Thaddeus Thad Hamilton of Sunrise, and a write-in candidate, Jeffrey M. Obos of Tallahassee. As of May 31, Putnam had raised nearly \$2 million and Hamilton had raised \$12,928, while Obos' campaign account showed no entries.

According to a state website, every legislative incumbent running for re-election, except Fullwood, qualified as well --- a total of 20 senators and 102 representatives.

Two senators face challenges from former members of that chamber. Sen. Maria Sachs, D-Delray Beach, will compete in one of the most closely watched legislative races in the state, a potential Senate District 34 rematch with former Sen. Ellyn Bogdanoff, R-Fort Lauderdale. The district includes parts of Broward and Palm Beach counties.

Bogdanoff, who lost to Sachs in 2012, will first face a primary challenge from Boca Raton businessman Joseph Bensmihen.

Sen. Geraldine Thompson, D-Orlando, qualified to run for another term in Orange County's Senate District 12. She'll face challenges from former Sen. Gary Siplin, D-Orlando, and Republican Fritz Jackson Seide.

Also qualifying this week was Sen. John Thrasher, a St. Augustine Republican who is widely considered the leading contender to become president of Florida State University.

On Friday, FSU's search committee voted to close the application process on Sept. 2 and make its recommendation to the university's board of trustees by Sept. 22.

If Thrasher is tapped as president between the primary and the general election, he could withdraw from his re-election bid in Senate District 6, which includes all of St. Johns, Flagler and Putnam counties and part of Volusia County; the Republican Executive Committee chairs in those counties would then decide who would run in Thrasher's stead.

Also qualifying for Thrasher's seat were fellow Republican Derek Hankerson and unaffiliated candidate Greg Feldman.

According to the House Republican Campaign Committee, 22 GOP candidates were re-elected without opposition and 18 face only primaries or general elections without Democrat opponents.

Rep. Steve Crisafulli, House Speaker-designate and chairman of the House Republican Campaign Committee, said in a statement he was "confident we will return a sizeable Republican majority to the Florida House of Representatives in November."