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Jeff Atwater and Adam Putnam Sitting Pretty in 2014

By: [Jeff Henderson](#) | Posted: June 26, 2014 3:55 AM



Jeff Atwater and Adam Putnam
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Most politicians would love to be in Jeff Atwater's and Adam Putnam's shoes this year. Both Cabinet officials are on the ballot this year and face third-string, at best, Democrat challengers, letting them use 2014 to work on building for the future.

Democrats had high hopes for Allie Braswell last year when he first jumped in the CFO race against Atwater. But only a few days after getting in, Braswell pulled out as the media reported his numerous bankruptcies.

Despite Allison Tant's promises to find credible candidates for every Cabinet race, only William Rankin, a businessman with a less-than-savory past, arose as a challenger for Atwater. But Atwater has nothing to fear from the Democrats this year, even after flirting with getting out of politics when he was in the running for the FAU presidency.

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Putnam also has to like his chances in 2014. The only Democrat challenging him so far is Thad Hamilton who, despite serving on the Broward County Soil/Water Commission, went nowhere in 2010. Like Rankin, Hamilton has shown a spectacular knack for not being able to raise enough money to be competitive at the state level.

By not giving either of these Republicans serious competition, Democrats could be inadvertently helping them in the future.

It's no secret that Atwater and Putnam are looking down the road at running for higher office. Whether Rick Scott or Charlie Crist wins the gubernatorial race, both Atwater and Putnam will be top contenders to be the Republican standard bearer in 2018.

One of them could also be a possible candidate for the U.S. Senate if Marco Rubio winds up on the Republican presidential ticket in 2016 or Bill Nelson retires in 2018. Putnam served in Congress before heading to Tallahassee in 2010 and rose up the GOP leadership in the House. Atwater pondered making a last-minute bid against Nelson back in 2012 but eventually opted out of the race.

Regardless, by not producing serious challengers to Atwater or Putnam, the Democrats are helping ensure they have a head start in 2014 which they hope to continue to build on. With ample war chests and strong campaign apparatuses in place, Atwater and Putnam can use 2014 to raise their profiles for bids for higher office. Expect to see both of them hitting the campaign trail hard even if their Democratic foes have no chance of beating them.

Tallahassee political writer Jeff Henderson wrote this analysis piece exclusively for Sunshine State News.

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