

CAMPAIGN 2014

Campaign cash flows in legislative races with competitive primaries



The Aug. 26 primary election will decide at least two contests for the Florida House of Representatives.

UNOPPOSED HOUSE, SENATE CANDIDATES

The following state senators and representatives from Miami-Dade and Broward counties were re-elected without opposition:

- Sen. René García, R-Hialeah (Florida Senate District 38)
- Sen. Miguel Díaz de la Portilla, R-Miami (Florida Senate District 40)
- Rep. Katie Edwards, D-Plantation (Florida House District 98)
- Rep. Shevrin Jones, D-West Park (Florida House District 101)
- Rep. Jared Moskowitz, D-Coral Springs (Florida House District 97)
- Rep. Sharon Pritchett, D-Miami Gardens (Florida House District 102)
- Rep. Holly Raschein, R-Key Largo (Florida House District 120)
- Rep. David Richardson, D-Miami Beach (Florida House District 113)
- Rep. Hazelle Rogers, D-Lauderdale Lakes (Florida House District 95)*
- Rep. Cynthia Stafford, D-Miami (Florida House District 109)
- Rep. Richard Stark, D-Weston (Florida House District 104)

In addition, former Rep. Evan Jenne, D-Fort Lauderdale was elected in Florida House District 99 without opposition.

* Denotes write-in candidate is on the November ballot.

BY KATHLEEN MCGRORY

HERALD/TIMES TALLAHASSEE BUREAU

TALLAHASSEE -- For a handful of candidates eyeing the state House and Senate, it's August 26 — not November 4 — that matters most.

The August primary will determine the outcome of two South Florida races: House District 94 in central Broward County and House District 107 in northern Miami-Dade County. Because no other candidates are running in November, the winner of the Democratic primary in each race will win the seat.

In the Senate, the District 36 primary winner is all but certain to join elected colleagues in Tallahassee because only a long-shot write-in candidate is on the ballot in November.

Here is a snapshot of key primary races in South Florida:

Senate District 36

Only one state senator from South Florida has a primary election this year: Sen. Oscar Braynon, D-Miami Gardens.

Braynon, whose district straddles Miami-Dade and Broward counties, is facing a challenge from fellow Democrat Anis Auguste Blemur.

Blemur, an accountant, has raised about \$14,400, state records elections show. He has loaned his campaign another \$55,800.

“Our community is in need of transformational leadership,” Blemur said, promising to hold more town hall meetings and crack down on crime.

Braynon has about \$177,400 in his campaign war chest.

“I produce for our district,” he said, noting that he secured \$10 million in state funds for the district this year, including \$500,000 for the city of Miami Gardens police department and \$5 million for Miami Dade College’s North Campus.

House District 94

The two candidates running to represent House District 94 serve on municipal boards in Broward County.

Bobby DuBose is a member of the Fort Lauderdale City Commission. Levoyd Williams sits on the commission in

Lauderdale Lakes and chairs its Community Redevelopment Agency. Both are Democrats promising to bring jobs to Broward County and improve the state's public schools.

DuBose had the fundraising edge, having collected about \$119,000 in campaign contributions, state records show. Williams has about \$41,200 in his warchest.

House District 96

The District 96 primary pits Broward County Commissioner Kristin Jacobs against former state Rep. Steve Perman. Both are Democrats.

Jacobs, of Pompano Beach, has twice served as Broward County mayor, and was appointed to the White House Task Force on Climate Change and Resiliency. She has raised about \$167,000 for her campaign, records show.

In Tallahassee, Jacobs would focus on transportation and the environment, she said, adding that she is particularly interested in water management.

"I don't think South Florida has that many experts on the issue," she said. "I come armed with information. I'm looking forward to being part of a statewide strategy on how we deal with water issues."

Perman is a chiropractor from Coral Springs. He served in the Florida House from 2010 through 2012, when he lost a primary challenge to another former state legislator. His campaign has collected about \$64,800 in contributions.

"I've already demonstrated a certain level of effectiveness," Perman said, noting that he spearheaded legislation increasing the penalties for stealing credit cards. He also passed a bill encouraging the creation of public-private partnerships for water storage.

The write-in candidate in the race, Ronald Bray, has raised no money, and told reporters he did not expect to win the race.

House District 100

Former North Bay Village Mayor Joe Geller is the front-runner in the contest to represent House District 100. The district runs along the coast from Surfside in Miami-Dade County to Hollywood in Broward County.

Geller serves as village attorney for El Portal and city attorney for Opa-locka. He has raised about \$138,000 for his campaign, records show.

Geller has won endorsements from the United Teachers of Dade, the Florida Education Association, the Florida AFL-CIO and the Broward PBA. His brother Steve was a longtime state lawmaker from Broward County.

The other candidates in the Democratic primary, teacher John Paul Alvarez and education entrepreneur Ben Sorensen, have raised \$23,000 and \$49,000, respectively.

Sorensen is a political newcomer. He runs a company that provides one-on-one coaching and development to business executives, and is a lieutenant in the U.S. Navy Reserve.

Alvarez won the primary election for a Florida House seat in Central Florida in 2012, but lost the general election to Rep. John Tobia, R-Melbourne Beach.

The winner of the primary will face two opponents in November: Republican Marty Feigenbaum, of Surfside, and Libertarian Party candidate Omar E. Recuero, of Hollywood.

House District 107

The Democratic incumbent in District 107, Rep. Barbara Watson, has drawn three Democratic opponents: former state Rep. Phillip Brutus; attorney Michael Joseph; and educator Dominique Simon.

Watson has raised the most money of the four candidates: about \$36,700.

Joseph has raised about \$15,000 in contributions. Brutus and Simon have raised about \$10,000 and \$3,200, respectively.

House District 108

Incumbent state Rep. Daphne Campbell, D-Miami, also has a primary race.

Campbell, a registered nurse, is being challenged by two other Democrats: public school administrator Taj Echoles and civic activist Michael Hepburn.

Echoles and Hepburn have raised about \$9,500 and \$4,100, respectively. Campbell has amassed more than \$45,000.

A fourth candidate, Cedon Saintil, Jr., is running without a party affiliation. His name will appear on ballot for the November general election, along with the winner of the Democratic primary.

Campbell, who was first elected in 2010, has long been dogged by legal troubles and investigations into her family healthcare businesses.

District 108 includes Biscayne Park, El Portal, Miami Shores and parts of the city of Miami.

House District 111

Political observers are also paying attention to the race for House District 111, which includes parts of Hialeah, Miami Springs and Virginia Gardens.

The lawmaker who currently holds the seat, Republican Rep. Eddy Gonzalez, cannot seek reelection because of term limits. He is instead running for Miami-Dade property appraiser.

Seeking to replace Gonzalez in the Florida House: Republicans Bryan Avila, of Hialeah, and Alex Anthony, of Miami Lakes.

Avila is an adjunct professor at Miami Dade College who sits on the Hialeah Planning and Zoning Board. He has raised about \$99,000 in political contributions, and loaned his campaign an additional \$20,000.

Avila boasts endorsements from Lt. Gov. Carlos Lopez-Cantera, Hialeah Mayor Carlos Hernandez, Miami Springs Mayor Xavier Garcia, and seven Republicans serving in the Florida House.

“I want to make sure we provide the sort of environment that promotes growth and prosperity for small businesses,” Avila said. “I also want to work with insurance companies to see how we can lower rates for homeowners.”

Anthony is the CEO of Paramount Security, a company with about 125 employees, according to his campaign website. He has loaned his campaign more than \$75,000 in cash and marketing services, and collected about \$2,800 in contributions, records show.

His platform includes lowering taxes, increasing funding for after-school program and fostering job growth.

He did not return calls from the Herald/Times.

The winner will face Democrat Mariano Ariel Corcilli in the general election. Corcilli, an attorney and former U.S. Marine, has raised about \$7,145 for his campaign, records show.

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