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Updates for Open US House Seats

Louisiana 1 (New Orleans suburbs)

Gov. **Kathleen Blanco** (D-LA) set March 8 for the party primaries to nominate candidates to fill the vacancy created by the election of Congressman **Bobby Jindal** (R-LA) as Louisiana's next governor. Runoffs, if needed, will be held on April 5 and the special General Election will be held on May 3. The filing period for the Jindal seat will begin Jan. 29 and end Jan. 31. These will be the first partisan primaries held in Louisiana since the early 1970s, when Gov. Edwin Edwards (D) and the Democratic legislature enacted the state's open primary system into law.

The 1st District, composed in large part of suburbs of New Orleans, is heavily Republican. Bush got 71% here in 2004 and some 90% of local elected officials are Republicans. It is only 13% African-American. Thus, a long list of Republican politicians are looking at the race for that rare political plum, an open congressional seat.

Several GOPers have already publicly indicated they plan to run. They include:

Slidell Mayor and former law enforcement official **Ben Morris** is well-liked, but his age (69) might be a negative factor for him.

State Rep. **Steve Scalise**, 42, of Jefferson Parish, was just re-elected to the state House by a large margin (62%-38%) over a well-financed opponent. During his legislative campaign, he indicated that he might run for Congress. Scalise "got a lot of credit," says one GOPer, when he withdrew from the 2004 congressional race and let Jindal have the seat without serious competition. He has ties to the business community and has met with the National Republican Congressional Committee (NRCC). On the money front, Scalise has \$104,000 left over from his abandoned 2004 congressional campaign.

Former Gov. and Congressman **David Treen** has said he is planning to run. If Morris has an age problem, consider that Treen is 79. He is well-known from his term as governor in 1980-84 and his four terms representing part of this district in congress (1973-81). He is a long-time GOP stalwart and has lots of friends among Republicans. If the field of candidates is very large, it is possible that he would make the runoff. "He just won't give it up,"



comments one source. “He’s become known as ‘Louisiana’s Harold Stassen,’” quips another.

A lot of other GOPers are looking at the race, or are being mentioned:

State Rep. **Tim Burns**, 50, of St. Tammany Parish is “very intelligent, very sharp,” says a colleague.

Jefferson Parish Councilman-at-large **Tom Capella**, 40, lost a district attorney’s race to Harry Connick. He can raise money and would be “a serious candidate,” says a local source

St. Tammany Parish President **Kevin Davis** would be a strong contender in part because his parish has grown since Hurricane Katrina.

Out-going state Sen. **Art Lentini** of Jefferson Parish is from a political family. His father was head of the Louisiana veterans’ affairs office and his uncle was a constable.

Out-going state Sen. **Tom Schedler**, 54, of the North Shore has been chairman of the state Senate Republican delegation for the past four years. He is popular and he is wealthy.

Attorney **Eric Skrmetta** of Jefferson Parish is independently wealthy. He has lost a legislative race, “but he can spend a half-million,” says one source.

Jefferson Parish Councilman-at-large **John Young** has a substantial base in his populous South Shore parish.

The winner of the Republican Primary, or at least the make-up of the runoff, may well be determined by how many candidates are running from each of the district’s two distinct regions, the North Shore (the parishes north of Lake Pontchartrain) and South Shore (parts of Jefferson Parish and parts of New Orleans and its suburbs south of the lake.) Five of the

announced or potential Republican contenders listed above are from the North Shore (Morris, Treen, Burns, Davis and Schedler), five from the South Shore (Scalise, Capella, Lentini, Skrmetta and Young). Until the filing deadline has passed, however, it will be difficult to measure the impact of the geographical factor.

For the Democrats, University of New Orleans professor **Gilda Reed**, 60, has announced and raised \$28,000 in the 3rd Quarter. 2006 candidate (7%) **David Gereighty** might also run; Gereighty has \$5,500 from last year’s race. State Sen. **Walter Boasso** (D), who just ran a losing (17% in a 12-candidate field) race for governor, has been mentioned in the press, but he is not likely to run.

Given the strong Republican voting history in the 1st District, the GOP primary is essentially tantamount to election. However, many voters -- accustomed to the open primary system -- may find that, because they are registered Democrats, they will be unable to vote in the Republican Primary. **Safe Republican.**

Virginia 1 (Hampton Roads, etc.)

It’s Del. **Rob Wittman** for the GOP and teacher and former candidate **Phil Forgit** for the Democrats as a result of the Republican and Democratic conventions held Nov. 10 in Virginia’s 1st District (Hampton Roads, etc.). The special election will be held on Tuesday, Dec. 11, to choose a successor to the late US Rep. **Jo Ann Davis** (R).

On the GOP side, Wittman won the nomination on the sixth ballot over millionaire and party activist **Paul Jost**, after most of the eleven initial candidates had withdrawn. Wittman’s endorsement by **Charles “Chuck” Davis**, widower of the late congresswoman, was the deciding factor.



The Democrats nominated Forgit, who won a Bronze Star for his military service in Iraq and received a teacher-of-the-year award from the National Education Association. Forgit ran a strong race for the House of Delegates in 2003. Forgit defeated **Edward “Ted” Hontz**, a vice president of Basic Commerce and Industries and a decorated Navy veteran.

The district has a Republican voting history and the GOP nominee will start the campaign as a heavy favorite. **President Bush** got 60% of the vote here in 2004, **George Allen** (R) carried it in his unsuccessful re-election bid in 2006, and most of the elected local officials are Republicans. However, Democrats won several area legislative races in the Nov. 6 elections. **Likely Republican.**

Mississippi 3 (Meridian, etc.)

Sixth-term US Rep. **Chip Pickering** (R) has announced that he will not seek re-election in 2008 and with the off-year elections now history, a lively contest is developing to succeed Pickering. The district has a strong Republican tilt -- Bush carried it by 65% in 2004 and 64% in 2000 -- so more GOPers are likely to run. But with congressional vacancies a rarity, politicians in both parties are stirring.

For the GOP, **Gregg Harper**, chairman of the Rankin County Republican Party, announced this week, as did **John Rounsaville**, the state director of the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Development Office. Rounsaville, 33, a former aide to Pickering, has been to Washington, DC, to meet-and-greet with potential contributors. Businessman **David Landrum** is expected to announce any day now. State Sen. **Charlie Ross**, once a well-known basketball player at Mississippi State and an unsuccessful candidate for lieutenant governor this year, is also likely to announce soon.

For the Democrats, the most prominent prospective contender is former Congressman **Ronnie Shows**, who represented most of the district before the last reapportionment. Shows lost to Pickering by 64% to 35% in 2002.

On the Republican side, Harper’s strengths include chairing the GOP in the district’s largest Republican County and strong ties to Christian conservatives. Rounsaville will benefit not only from his experience with USDA -- especially valuable in this mostly rural district -- but from his past role as Deputy Chief of Staff to Pickering and as a senior policy advisor to Gov. **Haley Barbour** (R). Moreover, Rounsaville has friends in Washington, DC, some of whom are already planning a political action committee to help him raise funds. Ross should benefit from name ID and contacts made in his recent unsuccessful bid for lieutenant governor

While these are the most likely GOPers to run for the seat, others are looking at the race, or at least being talked about in the Magnolia State. **Nick Walters**, a former national director of the USDA Rural Development Office, and a mover-and-shaker in the state’s Republican Party, is getting mentioned in the media. **Whit Hughes**, a former fundraiser for both Barbour, is also a potential contender. Three legislators, Ross, State Sen. **Videt Carmichael** and state Rep. **Greg Snowden** may also run. State Treasurer **Tate Reeves** (R) and Barbour campaign manager **Joe Nosef** have not ruled out the congressional race.

Several potential contenders in both parties have indicated that they will not run, including Lt. Gov. **Amy Tuck** (R), ex-state Attorney General **Mike Moore** (D), ex-**Kirk Fordice** aide **Heath Hall** and state Sen. **Gloria Williamson** (D).



The filing deadline is January 11, 2008; the primary is March 11; and the General Election on November 4. **Safe Republican.**

Alabama 2 (Montgomery, etc.)

US Rep. **Terry Everett** (R) announced that he will retire at the end of his current term, his eighth. On the GOP side, three candidates have announced, Montgomery state Reps. **David Grimes** and **Jay Love**, and three-term state Sen. **Harri Anne Smith** (R). Smith commissioned a poll which showed her first in a group of potential contenders, with 43%. A number of other GOPers have been mentioned, including former Christian Coalition leader **John Giles**; businessman **Tim James**; state Sen. **Barry Mask**; and businessman **David Woods**. Former Public Service Commissioner **George Wallace Jr.** has said he will not run.

On the Democratic side, **William Boyd**, a candidate for mayor of Montgomery, has announced. Other Democratic possibilities include state Sen. **Jimmy Holley** and state Rep. **Terry Spicer**. Some Democrats hope to persuade Montgomery Mayor **Bobby Bright**, currently an independent, to enter the race.

This is a heavily Republican district -- **President Bush** carried it with 67% in 2004 and it's 67% white. Talk that Democrats in the legislature would attempt a late redistricting to make the district more competitive has come to naught. Everett, who has some \$834,000 on hand, has said he will provide some of it to the Republican candidate in the race to succeed him. **Likely Republican.**

2007 Election Results

Kentucky: Beshear Unseats Fletcher

In Kentucky, as expected, challenger **Steve Beshear** (D), a former lieutenant governor,

had no trouble ousting scandal-plagued incumbent Gov. **Ernie Fletcher** (R). Beshear won by only slightly less than the wide margins he held throughout the campaign. With 100% of precincts reporting, Beshear had 619,553 (59%) to Fletcher's 435,772 (41%). The voters never lost their perception of Fletcher as a failed chief executive, whose first term was so marred by his confessed violation of the state's hiring laws that he was unable to govern effectively. Fletcher, whose high point came when he won a hard-fought primary with less than 50% of the vote, in the General Election campaign tried a series of moves to shift the voters' attention to other issues. He touted his own local construction projects and his tax-cut fiscal policies, which helped in the primary. He stressed his opposition to allowing state universities to grant health insurance to the domestic partners of same-sex couples that they employed, contrasting his view with Beshear's more moderate stance. He also hit Beshear for ruling, when he was state attorney general, that the Ten Commandments had to be removed from courthouses and for favoring allowing a referendum that would have the effect of expanding casino gambling in the state. None of these so-called "hot-button" issues or other attacks had any significant effect and Beshear won easily. Beshear's running mate, elected on the same ballot line, was state Sen. **Daniel Mongiardo** (D).

In the down-ballot races, there were no partisan shifts. Democrats kept the offices of attorney general, auditor and treasurer, while Republicans held on to the secretary of state and agriculture commissioner.

Mississippi: Barbour Reelected

Gov. **Haley Barbour** (R) won re-election in Mississippi yesterday, easily defeating his populist opponent, trial lawyer **John Arthur Eaves, Jr.** (D). In Mississippi, with 100% of



precincts reporting, Barbour had 415,512 (58%) to 300,078 (42%) for Eaves. Barbour's victory was no surprise. He was very well-funded and enjoying continued popularity for his efforts to help the state recover from the devastating effects of Hurricane Katrina in 2005. Moreover, Barbour's recruitment of new industry has helped bring down the state's once-high unemployment rate.

Despite Barbour's advantages, Eaves, 41, mounted a strong -- if ultimately ineffective -- challenge. Personally wealthy, Eaves spent more than \$4.5 million of his own money on his campaign. By touting his fundamentalist Christian background and a series of conservative positions on social issues, Eaves hoped to focus the campaign on Barbour's past as a lobbyist for "Big oil, Big Tobacco and Big Insurance." But despite Eaves' traditional populist combination of social conservatism and economic liberalism, he was unable to sway the state from its decades-long move to the GOP.

Barbour's victory carried with it every Republican statewide candidate on the ballot, except that Democratic Attorney General **Jim Hood** was re-elected. Going into the election, the GOP held five of the eight state constitutional offices on the ballot to the Democrats' three. Now Republicans will hold seven, the Democrats one. However, Democrats regained a majority in the state senate, which had recently been under GOP control after several party switches.

Virginia: Democrats Win State Senate

Virginia Democrats won four additional state senate seats in Nov. 7 balloting, giving them a 21-19 majority in the state's upper chamber, the party's first senate majority in 12 years. The current state senate is 23(R)-17(D). Democrats gained four seats in the House,

which will remain in Republican hands by 54 (R) to 44 (D), plus two independents.

The changes will be a major boost to Gov. **Tim Kaine** (D), who campaigned across the state for his party's legislative candidates. His proposals to expand the state's public kindergarten program and his transportation initiatives for Northern Virginia (Washington, D.C.'s suburbs) and the Hampton Roads area, as well as new taxes to pay for them, are likely to receive more favorable consideration when the legislature convenes in January.

The Democratic victories were concentrated in Northern Virginia and in the Hampton Roads area, with the GOP losing two seats in each region. In Northern Virginia, state Sen. **Jeannemarie Devolites Davis**, wife of US Rep. **Tom Davis** (R), lost her race by 45% to 55% to former Del. **Chap Petersen** (D). Had Congressman Davis entered the 2008 US Senate contest, his wife's defeat would have been a strong blow to his candidacy.

The Democratic gains bode well for the already bright prospects of former Gov. **Mark Warner** (D) in next year's US Senate race. In addition, Democratic hopes in two congressional districts are likely encouraged by the results. In the 11th District (Fairfax County, etc.), Davis may well choose not to run again, giving the Democrats an open seat in a district where they have been making significant gains. And in the 1st District (Hampton Roads, etc.), where the GOP also lost two state senate seats, the results give the Democrats a boost in the Dec. 11 special congressional election to fill the vacancy left by the death of Congresswoman **Jo Ann Davis**. The results may also make Virginia more competitive in next year's presidential election, a loss to the GOP, which has relied on the Old Dominion for decades.



Virginia Republicans attempted to use a strong stance against illegal immigration to stem the Democratic tide, especially in Northern Virginia, but the results suggest that the issue had limited appeal.

Louisiana: Democrats Hold on to House

As a result of the Nov. 17 runoffs, Louisiana's 105-member state House of Representatives has 53 Democrats, 50 Republicans and 2 independents. Despite the Democratic lead, House Republican Leader **Jim Tucker** is claiming victory in his bid to become speaker of the House, contending several Democratic lawmakers will back him. Democrat **James "Buddy" Caldwell**, a former district attorney, won a substantial 67%-33% victory over the GOP's **Royal Alexander** in the runoff for attorney general, giving the Democrats two state officials to the Republicans' five.

Grits

? **Virginia: Gilmore Announces.** Former Gov. **James Gilmore** announced on Nov. 19 that he will run for the US Senate next year. The race for the open seat of retiring US Sen. **John Warner** (R) will feature a heated contest between Gilmore and former Gov. **Mark Warner** (D). Warner is the early favorite.

? **Mississippi: Cochran a Go.** US Sen. **Thad Cochran** (R-MS), 69, announced last week that he will seek re-election in 2008. Had he not run, the race could have been competitive, but Cochran is a sure-bet for re-election.

? **South Carolina: Graham May Get Primary Foe.** "Buddy" **Witherspoon**, the state GOP's Republican National Committeeman, is expected to announce his candidacy for the US Senate any day now. Witherspoon will be challenging US Sen.

Lindsay Graham (R-SC), who is under fire from some conservatives for his support of a compromise immigration bill. Graham, who had \$4.2 million on hand as of Sept. 30, has been endorsed by US Sen. **Jim DeMint** (R-SC), Gov. **Mark Sanford** (R-SC) and by state Attorney General **Henry McMaster**.

? **Dixie Representatives Split on Gay Rights.** When the US House recently passed the Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA), which extends job-related civil rights to gays, 15 Southern Democrats deserted their national party and voted against the measure: AL: **Bud Cramer & Artur Davis**; AR: **Marion Berry & Mike Ross**; GA: **John Barrow & Jim Marshall**; LA: **Charlie Melancon**; MS: **Gene Taylor**; NC: **Mike McIntyre & Heath Shuler**; TN: **Lincoln Davis, Bart Gordon & John Tanner**; and TX: **Chet Edwards & Nick Lampson**. And five Southern GOPers left their party and supported ENDA: FL: **Lincoln Diaz-Balart, Mario Diaz-Balart & Ileana Ros-Lehtinen**; LA: **Jim McCrery**; and VA: **Tom Davis**.

? **Southern Voters Disapprove of Bush.** An Elon University poll, taken between Nov. 4 and Nov. 14, found that 57% of respondents in a five-state region (FL, GA, NC, SC & VA) disapprove of the way **President Bush** is handling his job. In addition, 53% "lack confidence" in Congress. When asked whether they trusted Bush or the Democrats more, 44% trusted the Democrats, 32% trusted Bush and 15% said neither. In the presidential election, however, 36% said they plan to vote Democratic next year and 35% said Republican. Among Democrats, **Hillary Clinton** had 45%, **Barack Obama** 17% and **John Edwards** 11%. Among Republicans, **Rudy Giuliani** led with 25%, **Fred Thompson** had 16% and **Mitt Romney** 12%.