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Tar Heel Governor's Race Heats Up

North Carolina is the only Southern state that elects a governor in a presidential year. Since Gov. **Mike Easley** (D) is term-limited, there are lively contests on-going in both parties to choose his successor. The primary is May 6; if no candidate receives at least 40%, there will be a runoff on June 24.

Democrats: Perdue's to Lose

Two major figures are running for the Democratic nomination, Lt. Gov. **Beverly Perdue** and two-term state Treasurer **Richard Moore**. Political novice **Dennis Nielsen**, a retired Air Force colonel, is also in the race.

Perdue has led from the beginning of the campaign and continues to do so. In her favor, she has been a popular officeholder and is strong with Democratic constituency groups, such as African-Americans and teachers. She also benefits because she would be the first woman governor of the state. Both Perdue and Moore have endorsed Barack Obama in the primary, but the expected boost in turnout of black voters is more likely to help Perdue than Moore. She has campaigned for improved education; she also cites her role in saving the state's military bases. Perdue is "the classic centrist progressive Democrat, in the mold of

(former Gov.) **Jim Hunt** or Mike Easley," says **Ferrell Guillory**, director of the University of North Carolina's Program on Southern Politics, Media and Public Life.

On the down side, while insiders say the race is Perdue's to lose, at least one observer notes that "she's very capable of making a mistake." For example, in one public forum, she said, in response to a question, "I have run a small business." Careful examination of her record, however, indicated that while she had administered several grants, she has had no small business experience. As a result, she avoids free-flowing press conferences. "It's difficult for the press to get access to her," notes one Tar Heel journalist.

Moore is in the position of challenger. He's got plenty of money, much of it raised from Wall Street interests who have dealt with the state treasurers' office. He's photogenic, smart and by all accounts, an adept politician. While his TV spots have been positive, he has attacked Perdue on the stump. But despite his best efforts for months, Perdue has maintained a significant lead in the race, in part because there are "no flash-point issues," as Guillory puts it, in the campaign.



Polling data started off favoring Perdue and has not changed substantially during the campaign. A Civitas Institute survey taken in February showed Perdue with 28%, Moore 23%; a SurveyUSA poll in March gave Perdue a 44%-28% lead, with 3% for Nielson.

On the financial front, the Democratic campaigns are equally well-funded. Perdue has raised a total of \$6,064,000 and had \$4,546,000 on hand at year's end. Moore raised \$6,093,000 with \$4,637,000 on hand.

Republicans: McCrory vs. the Field

State Sen. **Fred Smith**, Salisbury attorney **Bill Graham**, former state Supreme Court Justice **Bob Orr** and Charlotte Mayor **Pat McCrory** are running for the Republican nomination. With the exception of McCrory, who entered the race late, none of the Republican candidates are well-known or have been able to raise as much money as the Democrats.

McCrory has the advantage of being from the large population center of Charlotte, and the disadvantage of resentment of 'big city Charlotte' by voters in other parts of the state. He also has a more moderate record, in part because those who govern cities have to contend with different problems than others.

Smith, a wealthy state senator, has "worked his ass off," notes a newsman, hosting a series of barbecues across the state. He and Graham, a successful lawyer, have been fighting for conservative support. Smith is stressing measures to expel undocumented aliens from the state. Orr, despite an impressive resume, has not managed to catch hold with voters or campaign donors.

Guillory notes that the Republican with the best "get-out-the-vote" effort should win the primary. The maximum GOP turnout is likely to be 400,000; 40% would be 160,000.

McCrory, with much of his vote concentrated in populous Charlotte, may be best situated to generate a strong turnout.

In the money chase, the Republican campaigns are threadbare in comparison with the Democrats' flush war chests. McCrory entered late and has yet to file a complete return; in an initial report, he had \$417,000 on hand. Smith raised \$2,606,000, with \$1,084,000 at year's end. Graham raised \$1,472,000 with \$11,000 on hand. And Orr reported raising \$227,000, with only \$1,800 on hand.

A Survey USA poll taken in March for WTVD-TV in Raleigh showed McCrory with 26%, Smith 18%, Graham 16%, Orr 12% and 28% undecided. In General Election matchups, a January Rasmussen poll showed Perdue leading McCrory 42% to 38% and Moore leading McCrory 39% to 34%.

US Senate Updates

Virginia: Gilmore Leads Marshall

The "mass meetings," as they are called in Virginia, are underway to select an estimated six to nine thousand delegates to the state Republican convention on May 30-31, and initial reports indicate that the early favorite, former Gov. **Jim Gilmore**, is likely to win the GOP's US Senate nomination. About 20 counties have already held their meetings and although Del. **Bob Marshall** is running well in his Northern Virginia bailiwick, in the rest of the state Gilmore's campaign estimates their candidate is carrying virtually every county. Only Loudon County, which Marshall represents in the legislature, appears to have elected a majority of pro-Marshall delegates.

"The consensus is that Gilmore will win [the nomination], but that it may be more difficult than originally thought," says **Larry Sabato**, director of the University of Virginia's Center



for Politics. Down state, notes **Boyd Marcus**, a campaign consultant for Gilmore, Marshall is only winning “anywhere from zero to a third” of the delegates. Another candidate, political unknown **Robert Berry**, is also running for the Republican nomination.

Marshall’s Challenge. While Marshall’s support is strongest in Northern Virginia, where conservatives hold sway in many county GOP committees, he has also managed to garner the support of local party officials from other areas of the state. His strength among conservative activists is based on his strong stand in the legislature in opposition to abortion and to gay rights, augmented in Northern Virginia by his role in bringing a lawsuit to block a regional transportation tax. He gained credibility when the Virginia Supreme Court recently ruled the tax unconstitutional. Marshall, 63, suffers, however, from not having the name ID that former governor Gilmore enjoys.

The significant minority that is backing Marshall is motivated by several factors. One is that many of these conservatives are not pleased with the presidential nomination of **John McCain** and are looking for a way to re-imprint their own stamp on the party. They also don’t like a position taken by Gilmore in the past, when he said he did not favor making abortions illegal in the first eight weeks of pregnancy. According to the *Washington Post*, Marshall’s campaign manager, **Steve Waters**, ran the Family Foundation anti-same-sex marriage campaign in Virginia in 2006 and is well positioned to help Marshall with social conservatives. Marshall is also helped by his out-going personality and his adherence to principles, even when they conflict with his party. He is, for example, a strong environmentalist and has had the support of the Sierra Club in the past.

Despite his apparent large lead in delegate support for the May 31 convention vote, Gilmore is not ignoring Marshall’s campaign. Recently, 23 GOP leaders, including Lt. Gov. **Bill Bolling** and Attorney General **Robert McDonnell**, both prominent conservatives, endorsed Gilmore and urged the party to unite behind him as the candidate who offered the best chance of defeating Democrat **Mark Warner** in November.

Gilmore Looks to McCain Coattails.

Looking to the General Election, Marcus is confident that McCain will carry Virginia and “will be a significant benefit for us.” Sabato says that Virginia will be competitive in the presidential election. He adds that the Republicans, in choosing McCain, are nominating “the candidate most likely to carry Virginia,” citing the state’s large number of veterans and military personnel. Moreover, McCain is the kind of Republican who can win votes in Northern Virginia. In any case, Sabato sees the Democrats’ Warner as a heavy -- if not prohibitive -- favorite in November.

Vice-Presidency a Factor? One potential development that could affect the race is the prospect that either of two prominent Virginia Democrats could be tapped by **Barack Obama** for the vice-presidential nomination. If Obama should choose Gov. **Tim Kaine** (D), one of his campaign’s national co-chairs, the Democrats will be heavily favored to carry Virginia -- for the first time since 1964. Since Republican Lt. Gov. Bolling would take over the governorship if Kaine resigned, Virginia Democrats are likely to have mixed feelings about Kaine for veep. There is also talk that Obama might ask Warner to join his ticket. That would require the Democrats to quickly find another US Senate nominee. The betting is that they would pick one of the state’s Democratic congressmen or former Lt. Gov. **Don Beyer**.



Tennessee: Alexander Leads in Poll

A new poll conducted for US Sen. **Lamar Alexander** (R) shows him leading both of the candidates for the Democratic US Senate nomination. The survey, taken March 5-9 by Ayres, McHenry & Associates, showed Alexander leading **Mike Padgett**, a former clerk of Knox County, by 58% to 31%, and leading **Bob Tuke**, former state Democratic chairman, by 59% to 28%.

US House Updates

Louisiana: 1st District (Metairie, etc.) In the Republican Primary to choose a nominee to succeed former US Rep. **Bobby Jindal** (R), who resigned to become governor, state Sen. **Steve Scalise** led with 16,799 votes (48%) to 9,631 (28%) for state Rep. **Tim Burns**, who will face him in the runoff. Slidell Mayor **Ben Morris** received 7,388 (21%) and businessman **David Simpson** 932 (3%). Scalise, 43, a computer systems engineer, served three terms in the state House of Representatives prior to his election to the state Senate. Burns, 50, is in his fifth year in the state House. He is a small businessman and has taught law and business courses at several Louisiana universities.

Scalise, with a 20-point lead, is a strong favorite in the runoff, but it is not a done deal. Should third-place Morris -- silent so far -- endorse Burns, it would make the runoff more competitive. A major factor is the geographical rivalry between the North and South Shores of Lake Pontchartrain. Burns, from Mandeville, is focusing on the North Shore, which includes wealthy suburban neighborhoods, and gave him a strong vote in the first primary. Scalise has more money, but the South Shore's turnout was weak in the first vote.

In the Democratic Primary, University of New Orleans psychology professor **Gilda Reed**, 60,

easily defeated Air Force retiree **M. V. "Vinny" Mendoza** by 11,721 (70%) to 5,083 (30%). **President Bush** carried the district with 71% in 2004. **Safe Republican.**

Louisiana: 6th District (Baton Rouge, etc.)

Both parties have runoffs to pick a nominee to try to succeed US Rep. **Richard Baker** (R), who resigned to enter private business. On the GOP side, **Louis "Woody" Jenkins**, a longtime state legislator and a major force among the state's conservatives, received 14,849 votes (49.86%), narrowly missing a victory without a runoff. In second place was businesswoman **Laurinda Calongne** with 7,584 (25%), who will face Jenkins in the runoff. Other contenders were former Baker aide **Paul Sawyer** with 6,924 (23%) and **Michael Cloonan**, an industrial contracts manager, with 425 (1%). Sawyer, who attacked Jenkins in the first round, probably hurting both himself and Jenkins, has yet to make an endorsement in the runoff.

Given Jenkins' near-win in the first primary, he is a heavy favorite in the runoff. He is well-known, is a good campaigner, and is especially good at get-out-the-vote efforts. On the down side, Jenkins has a reputation for being divisive and too right wing. "Any campaign Jenkins is in -- which has sort of been his downfall -- has been controversial," says Baton Rouge pollster **Bernie Pinsonat**. This is likely to give him more trouble in the General Election than in the Republican runoff. In this campaign, however, Jenkins has reached out to more moderate territory, featuring a photograph of himself with **John McCain** on the front page of his website.

Jenkins, 61, is no stranger to close races. In 1996, he lost a US Senate runoff to **Mary Landrieu** (D) by 49.8% to 50.2%, a result he unsuccessfully challenged in court and the Congress. Jenkins is a community newspaper



publisher and former television broadcaster. **Laurinda Calongne** founded a successful healthcare consulting business. She was appointed to the Louisiana Health Works Commission by then-Gov. **Mike Foster** (R).

On the Democratic side, state Rep. **Dan Cazayoux**, who lost a bid for speaker of the Louisiana House earlier this year, is favored in the runoff with state Rep. **Michael Jackson**, an African American who is well-regarded by white voters in his South Baton Rouge bailiwick. His major boost, however, came from the backing of former Congressman and former state Sen. **Cleo Fields** (D), an African-American long active in Louisiana politics. A majority of the Democratic turnout is likely to be African American in this 33% black district. Cazayoux, despite being a trial lawyer with labor union support, “is a nice guy kind of Democrat. He gets along with people,” says one GOP insider. In the first vote, Cazayoux got 16,596 votes (35%) to Jackson’s 12,882 (27%). Also running were **Jason DeCuir** with 8,790 (19%), **Andy Kopplin** with 8,176 (17%) and **Joe Delatte** with 1,017 (2%).

In addition to the nominees of the two major parties, **Ashley Casey**, a former aide to millionaire gubernatorial candidate **John Georges**, is one of three independents in the General Election. Casey, who has the support of Georges, could be a factor in the General. She has said if elected she would caucus with the Republicans.

Look for the May 3 General Election to be highly competitive. The 6th District votes Republican, but Democrats are expected to target it. Although the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee (DCCC) initially recruited Cazayoux as a challenger to Baker, it will not take part in the runoff. **President Bush** carried the district with 59% in 2004 and Jindal carried it with 56% in the

2007 governor’s race. But Democrats believe that an influx of post-Katrina refugees from New Orleans makes the district winnable for them.

Mississippi: 1st District (Tupelo, etc.) Former US Sen. **Trent Lott** (R-MS) is supporting second-place finisher **Greg Davis**, mayor of Southaven, over top vote-getter **Glenn McCullough**, former mayor of Tupelo, in the April 1 runoff to choose the GOP nominee for the 1st District vacancy created by the elevation of **Roger Wicker** (R) to the US Senate. According to Washington’s *Roll Call* newspaper, the Davis campaign released a letter from Lott donating \$8,000 to Davis. Meanwhile, McCullough, who has been endorsed by third-place finisher **Randy Russell**, has released a poll, taken for him several days after the March 11 primary by On Message, showing him with a 45%-38% lead over Davis. The Democrats also have a runoff, between Prentiss County Chancery Clerk **Travis Childers** and state Rep. **Steve Holland**. The special General Election between the runoff winners is on April 22 and could be competitive.

Mississippi: 3rd District (Jackson suburbs, etc.) State Sen. **Charlie Ross** (R) and Rankin County GOP chairman **Gregg Harper** are in the runoff to succeed retiring US Rep. **Chip Pickering** (R). Ross led the first primary with 33% to Harper’s 28%. Harper has a loyal following among evangelical Christians and may also get support from backers of third-place finisher **David Landrum** (26%). Ross has more name ID and money and is likely to get support from who voted for **John Rounsaville** (10%).

Texas: 22nd District (Sugar Land, etc.) Twelve of Texas’s 19 Republican members of the US House endorsed **Pete Olson**, a former aide to US Sen. **John Cornyn** (R) and former



US Sen. **Phil Gramm** (R), over **Shelley Sekula Gibbs** in the April 8 runoff for the GOP nomination in **Tom DeLay**'s old district. The endorsements are notable in part because Sekula Gibbs is a former House member herself, albeit for only two months at the end of 2006. Sekula Gibbs, who garnered 30% in the first primary to Olson's 21%, responded by calling Olson an outsider who moved from Washington to Texas to run for the seat and by releasing a list of 30 local Republican officials and officeholders who are supporting her.

Florida 13 (Sarasota, etc.) A Republican poll in Florida's 13th District (Sarasota, etc.) shows freshman US Rep. **Vern Buchanan** (R) leading his second-time challenger **Christine Jennings** (D) by 53% to 37%. The poll was taken March 5-6 for the NRCC. Buchanan's lead in the survey shows a considerable improvement over his 369-vote win in 2006.

Grits

? GOP Targets Dixie Democratic Seats. The National Republican Congressional Campaign Committee includes five Southern congressional districts among its 24 targets for making US House gains in this fall's elections. The five Democratic incumbents that the GOP will focus on in Dixie are Nick Lampson (TX 22), Tim Mahoney (FL 16), Jim Marshall (GA 8), Ciro Rodriguez (TX 23) and John Yarmuth (KY 3). All are freshmen, when incumbents are traditionally most vulnerable, except Marshall, who was elected in 2002.

? Florida: Wasserman-Schultz. Meek Won't Help Democratic Challengers. Democratic loyalists in Florida and in Washington, DC, are not too pleased with recent statements by US Reps. **Debbie Wasserman Schultz** and **Kendrick Meek**,

both Democrats, that they will not campaign for their party's challengers to Florida's three Cuban-American Republican members of Congress. Wasserman Schultz is a co-chair of the DCCC's "Red to Blue" program designed to gain victories in GOP districts. She says she works too closely with **Ileana Ros-Lehtinen**, **Lincoln Diaz-Balart** and **Mario Diaz-Balart** to be comfortable working against them.

? Texas: Democrats Use Primary Turnout. When the votes were tallied in the Lone Star State on March 4, a record-breaking 2,868,000 Texas voters had participated in the hotly contested Clinton-Obama battle in Democratic presidential primary, to 1,385,000 -- less than half as many -- in the more lukewarm McCain-Huckabee competition on the GOP side. By itself, this might or might not be a harbinger of things to come in November. But Texas Democrats are working to take advantage of their primary turnout. They now have a list of nearly 2.9 million Democratic-leaning voters, along with their addresses, to use to boost turnout in the fall. Some one million Democrats showed up again for precinct caucuses that night, and the party also has their phone numbers and email addresses.

? Reading the Pollster's Tea Leaves. SPR occasionally gets questions or complaints about the results of polls taken for a particular candidate. Our policy is to publish them as reported, but to make sure that the reader understands who paid for the poll. Without particular regard to any of the surveys noted in this issue, we have found over the years that -- not surprisingly -- polls paid for by a candidate are generally more favorable to him or her than neutral polls. Nevertheless, these polls may reflect trends that interest our readers, so we will continue to publish them, always noting who paid the piper.