



©2005 Internet News Agency, LLC; Matt A. Towery, Chairman and CEO;  
Charles "Chuck" Clay, President; Pierre D. Howard, Vice-Chairman

*Number 725, June 2, 2008*

## Dixie's Competitive House and Senate Races

### Dixie's Hot Congressional Districts

In any given election, only a fraction of the 435 US House seats on the ballot have a real prospect of changing hands from one party to the other. This year some 21 of the South's 162 congressional seats are more or less "in play," 12 of them currently held by Republicans, 9 by Democrats. Due to such factors as a strong tide against the party in power and the ability of probable Democratic nominee **Barack Obama** to bring out an unusually large turn-out among African Americans and young voters, Democrats stand the better chance of making gains this fall. This was demonstrated in the Democratic victories in recent special elections in Louisiana 6 and Mississippi 1, both districts with strong Republican voting histories, suggesting that earlier assumptions about what constitutes a "safe Republican" seat need to be revised.

However, there is also the possibility that Obama will run very poorly in some Southern states, giving the GOP a boost in some congressional races. Here are thumb-nail descriptions of the districts that, at this point, are likely to be competitive in November.

### Twelve GOP Seats Democrats Might Win

**Alabama 2** (Dothan, etc.) - Open; US Rep. **Terry Everett** (R) retiring. Republicans have a hotly contested, six-candidate primary while the Democrats have a potentially strong nominee in Montgomery Mayor **Bobby Bright**, favored in a three-way primary.

**Florida 13** (Sarasota, etc.) Freshman **Vern Buchanan** (R) is raking in the cash, but he slipped by with only 50.07% in 2006. Third-time candidate **Christine Jennings** (D) is handicapped by the entrance of **Jan Schneider**, Jennings' 2004 and '06 primary foe, as an independent.

**Florida 21** (Miami-Dade, etc.) US Rep. **Lincoln Diaz-Balart** (R) is getting a spirited challenge from former mayor of Hialeah **Raul Martinez**. In the 1980s, Martinez was convicted of federal corruption charges, but won his case on appeal and subsequent trials ended in mistrials. But even some Republicans concede that the feisty Democrat will give Diaz-Balart a fight.

**Florida 24** (Orlando, etc.) US Rep. **Tom Feeney** (R) has come under fire for his alleged ties to convicted former lobbyist **Jack**



**Abramoff.** His Democratic opponent, former state Rep. **Suzanne Kosmas** (D), had more cash than Feeny at the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter.

**Kentucky 2** (Bowling Green, etc.) - Open; US Rep. **Ron Lewis** (R) retiring. Look for a hard-fought campaign between state Sens. **Brett Guthrie** (R) and **David Boswell** (D), an experienced statewide campaigner.

**Louisiana 4** (Shreveport, etc.) - Open; US Rep. **Jim McCrery** (R) retiring. There are competitive September 6 primaries in both parties and it could go either way in the fall.

**North Carolina 3** (Greenville, etc.) A divisive primary hurt antiwar US Rep. **Walter Jones** (R), and Democrat **Craig Weber** has high name ID from his stint as a TV meteorologist; moreover, the Democratic Primary turnout here was high.

**North Carolina 8** (Concord, etc.) US Rep. **Robin Hayes** (R) squeaked by with 50.2% in '06; challenger **Larry Kissell** (D), while still slow on fundraising, has a strong partisan wind at his back.

**Texas 10** (Austin, etc.) US Rep. **Mike McCaul** (R), with 55% in '06, faces TV's "Texas Justice" **Larry Joe Doherty** (D). Both will be well-financed.

**Virginia 2** (Virginia Beach, etc.) Sophomore **Thelma Drake** (R) survived (51%) a strong challenge last time. Her '08 foe, ex-diplomat **Glenn Nye** (D), is raising respectable money.

**Virginia 5** (Charlottesville, etc.) This one's a sleeper. US Rep. **Virgil Goode's** (R) high-profile conservatism has hurt him with University of Virginia liberals; attorney **Tom Perriello** (D) has almost matched Goode in the money chase. Bush got 56% here in '04.

**Virginia 11** (Fairfax County, etc.) - Open; US Rep. **Tom Davis** (R) retiring. A June 10 primary will decide whether County Commissioner Chairman **Gerald Connolly** (D) or ex-US Rep. **Leslie Byrne** (D) will face businessman **Keith Fimian** (R) in this suburban Washington, DC, district where Bush edged Kerry by 50%-49% in '04.

### Nine Democratic Targets for the GOP

**Alabama 5** (Huntsville, etc.) - Open; US Rep. **Bud Cramer** (D) retiring. State Sen. **Parker Griffith** (D), the likely victor over physicist **David Maker** in the June 3 Primary, will face one of six GOPers in the Republican Primary. Bush got 54% here in '04.

**Florida 16** (Hobe Sound, etc.) Freshman **Tim Mahoney** (D) won last time (50%) because disgraced ex-US Rep. **Mark Foley's** (R) name was still on the ballot. Mahoney will face one of three GOPers in the August 26 primary, each of whom has some political heft.

**Georgia 8** (Macon, etc.) US Rep. **Jim Marshall** (D) won with 51% last time; he faces potentially strong retired Air Force Major Gen. **Rick Goddard** (R) in this military base-laden district.

**Kentucky 3** (Louisville) Ex-US Rep. **Anne Northup** (R), who lost her congressional seat in '06 and a gubernatorial primary in '07, is trying for a comeback against freshman **John Yarmuth** (D). A McCain-Obama battle could influence the outcome.

**Louisiana 6** (Baton Rouge, etc.) The GOP's serious setback in the May special election may spur Republicans to unite behind a major effort to unseat just-elected freshman **Don Cazayoux** (D).

**Mississippi 1** (Tupelo, etc.) After its humiliating loss (46%-54%) in the May special



election, the GOP may try to defeat newly-minted freshman **Travis Childers** (D), but it won't be easy.

**North Carolina 11** (Asheville, etc.) If the Appalachian Democrats turn to the GOP in reaction to Obama's candidacy, then Asheville City Councilman **Carl Mumpower** (R) might have a chance against freshman **Heath Shuler** (D), who, however, gets good marks -- and money -- for a first term.

**Texas 22** (Sugar Land, etc.) **Tom DeLay's** (R) old district might return to its roots this fall, since first year incumbent **Nick Lampson** (D) won in 2006 against a write-in foe by a mere 52%. Lampson is facing ex-US Senate aide **Pete Olson**, a GOP-establishment favorite.

**Texas 23** (San Antonio, etc.) Freshman **Ciro Rodriguez** (D) won his special election last year with 54%. If Obama runs poorly among Latino voters, the GOP's **Lyle Larson** could give Rodriguez a battle.

### Dixie's GOP Senators in Trouble

The recent Democratic victories in two special congressional elections in Louisiana and Mississippi could be a harbinger of things to come in some of this year's Southern US Senate races. Although some GOP senators are safe, in a surprising number of Southern states where the GOP's incumbents have been considered all but unbeatable, polls show serious weakness for the incumbents. Here's a quick look at all 13 Dixie Senate races,

**Alabama.** Unlike some of his Dixie colleagues, US Sen. **Jeff Sessions** (R) is not getting a serious challenge. For starters, African-American state Sen. Vivian Figures (D) is not getting enough money to make an impact.

**Arkansas.** US Sen. **Mark Pryor** (D) doesn't even have a Republican opponent this year.

**Georgia.** Not all is doom-and-gloom for Dixie Republicans. In the Peach State, US Sen. **Saxby Chambliss** (R) led each of the five Democrats who are trying for the Democratic nomination by large margins -- from 19% to 23%. In his closest race, Chambliss had 58%, DeKalb County CEO **Vernon Jones** (D) 29%.

**Kentucky.** Senate Minority Leader **Mitch McConnell** was trailing millionaire **Bruce Lunsford** (D) by 49% to 44%, according to a Rasmussen Reports survey taken May 22, two days after Lunsford's victory in the Democratic Primary. Then a subsequent poll, taken for McConnell by Voter/Consumer Research, gave McConnell a 50%-39% lead.

**Louisiana.** After the Democratic victory in Louisiana's 6<sup>th</sup> District (Baton Rouge, etc.), the GOP is likely to have a difficult time defeating US Sen. **Mary Landrieu** (D-LA). A poll taken late March/early April by Southern Media Opinion Research showed Landrieu ahead of state Treasurer **John N. Kennedy** (R) 50% to 38%.

**Mississippi.** Given that recently appointed US Sen. **Roger Wicker's** (R-MS) former district has elected a Democrat to replace him in congress, Magnolia State Republicans could have a tough time keeping him in office for **Trent Lott's** four-year unexpired term. Two recent polls show differing, but close, results. It's 48% for former Gov. **Ronnie Musgrove** (D), 40% for Wicker, says a Hamilton Campaigns (D) poll for the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee; it's Wicker 46%, Musgrove 42%, says a Research 2000 survey for the left-of-center Daily Kos blog.... However, US Sen. **Thad Cochran** (R), running for re-election to a full term, is safe.



**North Carolina.** A Rasmussen poll taken just after the Democratic Primary showed challenger **Kay Hagan** (D) with 48% to US Sen. **Elizabeth Dole**'s (R) 47%, and a Public Policy Polling survey showed Dole with a tepid 48%-41% lead -- over her relatively unknown opponent. In an Elon University Poll, taken in mid-April, 37% said Dole deserves re-election to 45% who said it's time for a new person.

**Oklahoma.** Ten year Senate veteran **James Inhofe** (R), 72, is a good re-election bet this year, but he does face a spirited challenge from state Sen. **Andrew Rice** (D), 34. Inhofe will be helped by the McCain-Obama battle. Rice is raising some money, but not enough.

**South Carolina.** US Sen. **Lindsey Graham** (R), an increasingly influential figure on the national stage, faces an under funded foe to his right in the primary and merely token Democratic opposition in the fall.

**Tennessee.** Former state Democratic chairman **Bob Tuke** is favored over 20-year Knox County Clerk **Mike Padgett** in the August 7 primary to choose an opponent for US Sen. **Lamar Alexander** (R). As of March 31, Tuke had \$217,000 on hand to Padgett's \$77,000. Incidentally, Tuke is taking a page out of Alexander's 1978 book, walking across the state meeting folks and getting publicity. Alexander is a heavy November favorite.

**Texas.** A recent Rasmussen poll shows incumbent **John Cornyn** (R) with 47% to challenger **Rick Noriega**'s (D) 43%. And a poll taken for the liberal-leaning Daily Kos website showed Cornyn with a similar 48%-to-44% lead, again a poor showing for an incumbent against a little-known foe. Cornyn has been weak in opinion surveys for months. Meanwhile, the Obama campaign has launched

a voter registration drive in the state's four largest cities.

**Virginia.** Popular Democratic former Gov. **Mark Warner** (D) is already a heavy favorite to defeat the GOP's former governor **Jim Gilmore** and claim the seat to be vacated by retiring US Sen. **John Warner** (R).

### **National GOP Expands Primaries Role**

National GOP leaders in Congress will play a greater role in Republican Primary contests this year in an effort to assure the party has the strongest nominees in the General Election. The change was announced last week by House Minority Leader **John Boehner** (R-OH). Subsequently, however, US Rep. **Tom Cole** (R-OK), chairman of National Republican Congressional Committee (NRCC), the party's lead committee for electing Republicans to congress, announced that there had been no change in his committee's role in contested primaries. NRCC spokesman **Ken Spain** tells SPR that "the Leadership will get involved in helping those candidates, but that will not be a pre-primary endorsement by the NRCC." So although the Republican Leadership, including the House Republican Conference and party leaders elected by Republican House members, will take sides in some primaries, the NRCC will continue its policy of remaining officially neutral in primaries. Spain noted that Chairman Cole as an individual has contributed to eight candidates in Republican congressional primaries this year.

**Impact on Southern Races.** Although the Republican Conference does not have the fundraising or campaign expertise on staff equivalent to the NRCC, the GOP Leadership in Congress does have considerable clout. One example of the Leadership's involvement has been in Georgia's 8<sup>th</sup> District (Macon, etc.),



where Minority Leader Boehner headlined a fundraiser for retired Maj. Gen. **Rick Goddard** even though former US Rep. **Mac Collins** (R), who received 49% in his 2006 race against incumbent Democrat **Jim Marshall**, had not yet ruled out running. But the NRCC, which helped recruit Goddard, did not endorse him prior to the filing deadline.

The Republican Leadership is also expected to get involved in the GOP primary in Louisiana 4 (Shreveport, etc.), where retiring US Rep. **Jim McCrery** (R) is supporting attorney **Jeff Thompson**, a former chamber of commerce president, over two other Republicans, and possibly discourage others may filing before the July 11 deadline.

In Alabama's 2<sup>nd</sup> (Dothan, etc.) and 5<sup>th</sup> (Huntsville, etc.) Districts, contested primaries are coming up on June 3, hardly leaving enough time for national GOP leaders to get involved, although if either race goes to a runoff on July 15, involvement by House GOP leaders cannot be ruled out.

**Placing Blame for Recent GOP Losses.** The change in the national Republican role in contested congressional primaries came about because of GOP concerns about two recent special elections for congress, in Louisiana 6 (Baton Rouge, etc.) and Mississippi 1 (Tupelo, etc.), as well as one in former Speaker **Dennis Hastert**'s district in Illinois. Former NRCC Chair **Tom Davis** told *The Hill* newspaper that bad Republican candidates contributed to those defeats and that "a little adult supervision would have helped."

It is questionable, however, whether the NRCC or the Republican Leadership could have changed the outcome of either Southern contest. In Mississippi, where GOP nominee **Greg Davis** was handicapped by geography -- he was the mayor of Southaven, a suburb of

Memphis on the Western edge of the district -- his trump card in the primary was strong backing from former US Sen. **Trent Lott** (R-MS), still a powerful figure among Magnolia State Republicans.

Similarly, in Louisiana, GOP nominee "**Woody**" **Jenkins** was perceived -- probably correctly -- as too rightwing, even for such a Deep South district. However, it is doubtful whether the conservative voters who dominated the district's Republican Primary and have been fans of Jenkins for decades would have been dissuaded by "outsiders" taking up the cause of another candidate.

**Criticism of the Old NRCC Policy.** The NRCC previously had a policy of choosing sides in primaries. Although the policy was supported by former NRCC chairmen Davis (R-VA) and **Tom Reynolds** (R-NY), it created controversy within the party and was reversed when Cole took over as chairman.

The NRCC's former policy of taking sides in primaries got a black eye in 2006 in several races, including one in Texas 17, where Iraq veteran **Van Taylor** had strong backing from the Washington committee, and as a result, much greater financial resources than **Tucker Anderson**, a former aide to US Rep. **Pete Sessions** (R-TX). Despite the imbalance in funding and national GOP support, many local Republican activists and both the *Dallas Morning News* and the *Fort Worth Star Telegram* endorsed Anderson.

The NRCC backed Taylor in part because it wanted to have more military veterans on the ballot and because it deemed Taylor was a better fit for the district. Anderson argued, plausibly, that while he was a native of the district, Taylor had moved into the district to run for Congress. He contended that if Taylor were the nominee, this would be a major



problem in the General Election campaign against vulnerable incumbent **Chet Edwards** (D-TX), who had won by a slim 51% in 2004.

Despite being outspent \$629,000 to \$66,000, Anderson lost the primary to Taylor by 46% to 54%, hardly underscoring the NRCC's contention that Taylor was the more electable candidate. Moreover, as Anderson predicted, the Democrats focused on Taylor's carpetbagger status and Edwards won by a much improved 58% to 40%. A good case can be made that had the NRCC stayed out of the primary, Anderson would have won both the primary and the General Election. As it is, this year Republicans are making only a token effort against Edwards: At the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter, GOP nominee **Rob Curnock** had \$2,766 on hand to Edwards' \$1,288,190.

## Grits

### ? McClellan Book Pay-back for Mama?

Overlooked in all the hoo-hah over the **Bush**-bashing book of former White House press secretary **Scott McClellan** is that the President supported Texas Gov. **Rick Perry** (R) over McClellan's mother, **Carole Keeton Strayhorn** -- aka "One Tough Grandma" -- in the 2006 Texas governor's race, while McClellan was still in the White House. Strayhorn, the state's comptroller and three-time mayor of Austin, started out her campaign as a Republican, but switched to running as an independent. Not only is blood is thicker than water, but son Scott's interest in his mother's career was more than familial; he had served as her campaign manager in three of her races. In 2006 Bush and McClellan appeared to jovially agree to disagree about the race, but McClellan's hostility toward his boss may have developed at that time.

### ? Wilder Stepping Down in Richmond.

Richmond Mayor **Douglas Wilder** (D), a political maverick who made history in 1989 as the first African-American elected governor of one of the U.S.'s 50 states, has decided after four years as the city's CEO he will not seek re-election. Wilder, now 77, has a reputation for public conflict with his political foes, including those in his own party. He and former US Sen. "**Chuck**" **Robb** (D) clashed notably in the 1990s, and more recently Wilder has been at odds with his city council. But he is most noteworthy for pioneering the phenomenon of a black candidate who could appeal successfully to white voters -- and in a bastion of the Old Confederacy at that. This was revolutionary when Wilder launched his successful campaigns for lieutenant governor in 1985 and for governor in 1989. His strategy of appealing directly to white voters by running a non-confrontational campaign on non-racial issues is similar to that now used by **Barack Obama**, whom Wilder has endorsed. Wilder, whose own 1992 presidential campaign was undermined in part by African-American rival **Jesse Jackson**, may finally see his strategy bear fruit nationally this fall.

### ? Florida Democrats Claim Hispanic Gains.

Alone among the states with a large Latino population, Florida has stood out for having more Hispanic Republicans than Hispanic Democrats, due mainly to the Sunshine State's Cuban-American community and its fierce anti-Castro stance. This year, however, Democrats have overtaken Republicans among Hispanic voters. Statistics released to Florida's political parties show there are now 418,339 (35.5%) Latino Democrats to 415,086 (35.2%) Latino Republicans. In addition, 29.3% of Florida's Hispanic voters are registered as independents. Two years ago, the GOP had a 50,000 advantage among Florida's Hispanics.