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## Louisiana: Jindal on the First Ballot?

Alone in the nation, the Bayou State holds its non-partisan primary on Oct. 20. Republican **Bobby Jindal**, a second-term congressman, is the acknowledged frontrunner. Although 13 candidates are in the race, Jindal's major competitors are two Democrats, state Sen. **Walter Boasso** and Public Service Commissioner **Foster Campbell**, and independent **John Georges**. Boasso and Georges recently switched their registration from the Republican Party. Campbell is an economic populist in the **Huey Long** tradition.

As the campaign comes to a close, the Democrats are attacking Jindal non-stop, on everything from his rare appearances at joint debates to policies of the US Department of Health and Human Services when he was a high-ranking official there. One ad brands Jindal with having "a big brain and a little heart." Jindal, however, is quick to respond to each and every attack, having failed to do so in his 2003 gubernatorial bid, which he lost narrowly to **Kathleen Blanco** (D).

No recent polls have been done, but those done in August and earlier showed Jindal at or over 50%, with the other three at around 8% to 10% each. Baton Rouge pollster **Bernie Pinsonat** says, based on some 25 polls he's conducted

recently in state legislative races, which usually add on a gubernatorial preference question, that Jindal is "in the 52% to 55% range." Jindal is running at about 65% among white voters -- "he needs 60%," says Pinsonat.

Jindal's major foes all have drawbacks. Boasso polls well in New Orleans, but not in North Louisiana. Until his recent party switch, he was a conservative Republican, not a plus with Democrats, though some of his ads, target partisan Democrats. "Some things just go together," says a Boasso ad, "like red beans and rice, gumbo and Tabasco, and -- unfortunately for Louisiana -- George Bush and Bobby Jindal." The ad says Jindal backed Bush "100%" on the Iraq War and concludes, "I support bringing our troops home, especially the Louisiana National Guard."

Georges, a successful businessman, has the ability to write checks. However, he is basically unknown and, as an independent, has no party organization or natural constituency.

Campbell has some strength in his home region, North Louisiana, which shows up in the legislative polls. His populist message appeal resonates with some lower income voters, but he unknown in most of the black



community. "He gets 3% in New Orleans," notes Pinsonat. Moreover, Campbell -- unlike Boasso and Georges -- is not wealthy.

No single candidate is popular among African-Americans, who may account for as much as 29% of the turn-out -- post-Katrina estimates are vague. Thus, black turn-out could be relatively low, which would boost the GOP.

### Louisiana House Up for Grabs

Republicans are hoping to win control of the Louisiana House of Representatives, but the relatively better recruiting success of the Democrats may help them retain their majority in this fall's elections. At present, the 105-member state House of Representatives has 55 Democrats, 43 Republicans, 1 independent and 1 vacancy. (The Senate -- 25D-14R -- is not up for election until 2008.)

One GOP seat has no Republican running this year, so the GOP needs to hold 42 seats and win eleven new ones to gain control of the lower chamber for the first time since Reconstruction. Due mainly to term-limits, there are 50 open seats in the House in this fall, "22 or 23 of these are competitive," says a GOP spokesman, only two of them currently held by Republicans, giving them a rare opportunity for major gains.

**Bernie Pinsonat**, who has done extensive polling in state legislative races, believes that Democrats will hold on to the state House unless Republican **Bobby Jindal** reaches 55% on Oct. 20. Then, says Pinsonat, "It may cause a couple of [state House races] to tip over to the Republicans." Thus, Democrats are continuing to attack Jindal heavily, in hopes of keeping his margin down and holding on to more of their state House seats. If Republicans do win a majority, Louisiana will join other Southern states where the GOP has taken over

one or both houses of the legislature (FL, GA, KY, OK, SC, TN, TX & VA).

Republican candidates should also benefit from the population displacements of the 2005 hurricanes; more African-American than white voters left the state and have not returned. Finally, many voters place the blame for the slow recovery on Gov. **Kathleen Blanco** (D) or Mayor **Ray Nagin** (D), rather than on the Republican administration of **President Bush**.

The Democrats have compensated for some of these problems by superior candidate recruitment. Even House GOP Caucus Chairman **Jim Tucker** has been quoted in the news media as lamenting his party's failure to get more candidates on the ballot.

In addition, the Democrats may have gotten a boost from the recent scandal involving US Sen. **David Vitter**'s (R) telephone number on a Washington, DC, madam's telephone records. Vitter had been spear-heading Republican efforts to take the House, using a political action committee he founded called Louisiana Committee for a Republican Majority; the group's website now features a letter, not from the senator, but from **Wendy Vitter**, the senator's wife.

If the GOP makes major gains in both the legislative and executive branches, this year's elections could be a major turning point in the state's political history. Unlike their counterparts in many other Southern states (e.g., FL, GA, SC & TX), Louisiana Democrats have remained strong during the partisan realignments of the past several decades. Thus, this election could be a pivotal one for the state.

Partisan control aside, it is noteworthy that candidates in 26 House districts are unopposed, five of them non-incumbents.



Moreover, the Republicans and Democrats each failed to recruit a candidate in one district they now hold. “We have the least incumbents running for re-election in Louisiana history,” notes one lawmaker, citing the effects of cuts in retirement benefits, lower insurance coverage, “no salary increase in ten years and Jindal’s (R) ethics bill” as reasons -- on top of term limits -- for the retirements and the recruitment difficulties in both parties.

### Harry Dent, 1930-2007

**Harry Dent**, the man credited with devising the Republican Party’s “Southern Strategy” that changed the South from a Democratic to a Republican stronghold, died at the age of 77 Sept. 28 in Columbia, South Carolina. In recent years, he had suffered from Alzheimer’s disease, the ultimate cause of his death.

Dent was a pivotal figure in the rise of the South to a position of power and influence in national politics. Working first as an aide to US Sen. **Strom Thurmond** (D>R), later as chairman of the South Carolina Republican Party, and still later as President **Richard Nixon**’s top political aide, Dent exhibited extraordinary political skills.

He was Thurmond’s Administrative Assistant in 1964 when the Senator became a Republican and campaigned for **Barry Goldwater** across the Deep South, effectively shifting several Southern states out of the **George Wallace** column and into Nixon’s, which put him into the White House.

In 1966, Dent returned to South Carolina and - with Thurmond’s backing -- won the chairmanship of the state’s fledgling but vibrant GOP. He managed the first major Republican effort in South Carolina to win both federal and state offices, in the process

helping reelect Thurmond as a Republican and putting 26 GOP lawmakers in the legislature.

In 1968, he worked with Thurmond to support **Richard Nixon**’s nomination for president at the Republican Convention in Miami, against both **Ronald Reagan** and **Nelson Rockefeller**. Later, as President Nixon’s political aide, Dent helped engineer the President’s nomination of Judge **Clement Haynsworth** of South Carolina to the United States Supreme Court, a nomination that failed to win confirmation due to liberal and labor opposition.

In 1970, after the defeat of Congressman **Albert Watson** (R-SC) in a campaign in which the GOP emphasized its opposition to busing to achieve school desegregation, Dent helped put the South’s Republicans on a new course. He counseled Thurmond to hire **Thomas Moss**, an African American, as a staff member. Thurmond did, becoming the first member of the South Carolina delegation of either party to integrate a congressional staff. From his White House post, Dent worked to help Thurmond and Moss obtain federal grants for a number of black institutions in South Carolina. Thurmond’s change of direction, taken with Dent’s encouragement and support, sent the signal to the rest of the South’s Republican activists, many of whom had worked against racial integration, that the time had come to make peace with the new bi-racial South.

Dent was not involved with Watergate, but did plead guilty to an unrelated misdemeanor involving illegal funding of House and Senate campaigns. Later, Dent left his law practice and became a lay minister, working both with the Billy Graham Foundation and with “Laity Alive and Serving,” an organization founded by him and his wife, **Betty Francis Dent**, who survives him, along with two sons, two daughters and nine grandchildren.



In his introduction to *The Prodigal South Returns to Power*, one of five books Dent authored, he wrote, "The aim of the southern strategy was not to rule or ruin, but to have the South treated just like any other section of the USA -- not to be looked up to, only to be seen on a par; not to impose the southern will, but to have it considered without regard to preconceived notions about the southern states and their people."

### Virginia: Democrats See 2007 Gains

Old Dominion Democrats expect to gain control of the state Senate after the votes are counted on Nov. 6. They need four seats to hold a majority of the upper chamber, now divided 23R-17D. Gov. **Tim Kaine** (D), the popular governor who is campaigning for his party's legislative candidates, says there are nine competitive state Senate races. Even discounting for partisan bias, Kaine's analysis suggests a four-seat gain -- given the Democrats' recent progress in the state -- is an achievable goal. One party (D) insider tells SPR the Democrats believe they will gain three seats in Democratic-trending Northern Virginia (NOVA) alone.

One of the GOP losses could be state Sen. **Jeanne Devolites-Davis** (R), who is facing a tough challenge from ex-state Rep. **Chap Peterson** (D), a former (losing) candidate for lieutenant governor. According to one private poll (D), Devolites-Davis, wife of US Rep. **Tom Davis** (R), is down 10 points, although she is raising a large war chest (\$881,000 to Chapman's \$470,000 as of Aug. 31). If she loses, it will be a heavy blow to Davis's prospects for a US Senate bid in 2008, since Davis's strong point is his ability to help the GOP statewide by winning votes in NOVA. It would also make Davis's 11<sup>th</sup> District (Annandale, etc.) a likely Democratic target

next year -- whether or not Davis is seeking re-election to Congress.

### South Carolina: Huckabee, Paul Win Christian Vote

When the Palmetto Family Council held its "Stump Meeting and Straw Poll" late last month in Columbia, former Arkansas Gov. **Mike Huckabee** (R) came in first, with 38% (206 votes). Since Huckabee and California Congressman **Duncan Hunter** (R) were the only major candidates to speak to the gathering in person -- the others (except **Rudy Giuliani**) addressed the meeting by telephone -- and since former Baptist minister Huckabee has a natural appeal to the Christian conservative constituency, Huckabee's win, while impressive, was not a shock. What was a shock was Texas Congressman **Ron Paul**'s (R) second place, with 33% (179 votes).

Upon closer examination, Paul's victory reflects his supporters' strong organization effort, rather than a sizable base within the religious right. "Of all the candidates on the ballot," the Council's executive director **Oran Smith** told SPR, "Ron Paul's group made the most effort to get their supporters there." (Anyone could participate; the meeting was not restricted to Council members.) While not denying that Paul has support among the state's Christian conservatives, Smith did say, "I would surmise that Ron Paul's showing was greater than if we would survey our donors." After Huckabee and Paul, **Fred Thompson** came in third with 8%, Kansas Senator **Sam Brownback** fourth with 5%, Hunter fifth with 5%, **Mitt Romney** sixth with 3% and **John McCain** seventh with 2%.

### US House Updates

**Kentucky: Northup (R) Helps Would-be Successor (R).** Former US Rep. **Anne**



**Northup** (R-KY) who lost her bid for reelection in the 3rd District (Louisville) last year, then a GOP gubernatorial primary this year, is headlining a fundraiser for former US Attorney **Erwin Roberts** (R). Roberts, 35, is challenging freshman **John Yarmuth** (D), who defeated Northup in 2006. As of June 30, Roberts had \$26,000 on hand; Yarmuth had \$456,000 and is personally wealthy (publishing).

**Texas: Pasadena Mayor Enters 22<sup>nd</sup> District Race.** Pasadena Mayor **John Manlove** (R) resigned as his city's CEO, reports the *Houston Chronicle*, to enter the GOP primary to nominate a GOP challenger to freshman US Rep. **Nick Lampson** (D). This is former House Majority Leader **Tom DeLay**'s old district and one of the GOP's top targets nationwide. Manlove's base is likely to be in Pasadena, a large Houston suburb. Manlove joins four other Republican contenders: State Rep. **Robert Talton**, ex-Sugar Land official **Dean Hrbacek**, ex-Houston Councilwoman **Shelley Sekula-Gibbes** and **Pete Olson**, a former aide to US Sens. **John Cornyn** and **Phil Gramm**. One sidelight to the GOP primary: Talton, a solid social conservative, could gain or lose from his active participation in opposing state House Speaker **Tom Craddick**, a fellow GOPer. Talton, says Lone Star Report's **William Lutz**, "spent the entire [legislative] session making life miserable for Craddick, and he's pretty good at it. The guy is smart." While that will appeal to the odd-fellows coalition of staunch conservatives and moderates who dislike Craddick, his anti-Speaker role could also spell trouble for Talton should he make the runoff; that's when Craddick's ties to Houston's major GOP donors could undermine Talton's effort by funding his runoff opponent.

## Vox Populi

**Florida and South Carolina:** The latest InsiderAdvantage polls of GOP voters, taken Oct. 2, showed **Rudy Giuliani** running strong in Florida, with 29% to **Fred Thompson**'s 19%, **Mitt Romney**'s 16%, **John McCain**'s 10%, **Mike Huckabee**'s 6% and **Ron Paul**'s 3%. In South Carolina, Thompson was first with 21%, followed by a dead heat for second place among Giuliani, Romney and McCain, with 16% each. Huckabee had 11% -- the first time we've seen him break single-digits. Paul had 3% and **Duncan Hunter** and **Sam Brownback** had 2% each.

**Kentucky: Beshear (D) Still Leading by Big Margin.** Former Lt. Gov. **Steve Beshear** (D) continues to maintain a powerful lead over scandal-plagued Gov. **Ernie Fletcher** (R). According to the Louisville *Courier-Journal*'s "Bluegrass Poll" announced Sept. 20, Beshear had 55%, Fletcher 35%. This poll echoes two other September surveys: A *Lexington Herald-Leader/Action News 36* poll gave Beshear a 56%-39% lead and a SurveyUSA poll showed him ahead 58%-39%.

**Kentucky: Stumbo vs. McConnell?** Recent polls suggest that US Sen. **Mitch McConnell** (R), the Senate Minority Leader, would be favored for reelection -- though not overwhelmingly -- if he faces the Bluegrass State's Attorney General **Greg Stumbo** (D) next year. A mid-September survey taken for the *Courier-Journal* showed McConnell's job approval at 54%, with 28% disapproving. The same survey gave Stumbo an approval rating of 47%, with 26% disapproving. Another September survey, taken for the *Lexington Herald*, showed that voters do not approve of McConnell's position on the war in Iraq, by 55% to 38%. However, voters did approve of McConnell's performance overall, but by a narrower margin than in the *Courier-Journal*



poll -- 47% approve, 44% disapprove. Stumbo, who was the running mate for lieutenant governor on the ticket with millionaire **Bruce Lunsford**, which came in second in the May 22 primary, was chiefly responsible for the investigation and prosecution of Gov. **Ernie Fletcher**'s (R) hiring practices. Stumbo has not said he will run against McConnell, but has formed an exploratory committee. Other Democrats, including Iraq War veteran **Andrew Horne**, an unsuccessful congressional candidate in 2004, and millionaire **Charlie Owen**, are also considering opposing McConnell.

**North Carolina: Perdue Leads for Governor; GOP Split.** Lt. Gov. **Beverly Perdue** (D) continues her significant lead for the Democratic nomination in the Tar Heel governor's race. Perdue had 35%, state Treasurer **Richard Moore** 27%, in an Elon University Poll, taken Sept. 24-27. On the GOP side, substantially fewer voters have chosen a candidate from the GOP's relatively unknown roster. Attorney and conservative activist **Bill Graham** had 12%, former state Supreme Court Justice **Bob Orr** 11% and state Sen. **Fred Smith** 11%. Those who have made up their mind account for 38% of Democrats and a whopping 67% of Republicans.

**Virginia: Mark Warner (D) Ahead in another Poll.** Former Gov. **Mark Warner** (D) is leading potential opponents in the second survey taken since he announced he would run for the US Senate vacancy created by **John Warner**'s (R) retirement in 2008. Warner had 60%, former Gov. **Jim Gilmore** (R) 32%, in a mid-September SurveyUSA poll taken for WJLA in Washington, DC. Warner was somewhat stronger against US Rep. **Tom**

**Davis** (R), leading him 62% to 30%. His two-to-one leads are even stronger than those in a Rasmussen poll taken a week earlier, when Warner led Gilmore 54% to 34% and led Davis 57% to 34%.

## Grits

**? Tennessee: The Son Also Rises.** **Mike McWherter** (D), a Jackson wholesale liquor distributor and the son of popular former governor **Ned McWherter** (D), announced that he is forming an exploratory committee for a 2008 US Senate bid. McWherter, 51, will be opposing incumbent **Lamar Alexander** (R). McWherter is widely expected to make his candidacy official in the near future. One boost to McWherter has come in the decision of ex-state Democratic Chair **Bob Tuke**, a wealthy Nashville lawyer, to take himself out of the race. Thus McWherter will be spared the expense and potential battering of a Democratic Primary. Alexander, a freshman US Senator and a former governor of Tennessee, is a fixture in Volunteer State politics and remains the favorite, but McWherter's candidacy guarantees the Democrats won't be giving Alexander a bye.

**? Florida: Spouses Do End-Run Around 'No Campaign' Pledge.** The Democratic presidential candidates have agreed not to campaign in the Sunshine State as long as its primary date violates the Democratic National Committee's rules. However, the 'no campaign' pledge does not extend to the spouses of the candidates, and, according to the *Miami Herald*, they have been busy hitting the Florida hustings, drawing attention to their other half's White House ambitions. **Elizabeth Edwards** and **Bill Clinton** conducted high-profile book tours in Coral Gables and Jacksonville, and **Michelle Obama** has head-lined events in Miami, Palm Beach and Jacksonville. Later this month, former President Clinton will attend the state Democratic Convention in Lake Buena Vista. (Also, note that fundraising is not included in the 'no campaign' pledge.)