

## INTERNAL REPUBLICAN BATTLES AFFECT LA. CONGRESSIONAL RACES

In key Louisiana congressional districts, democratic candidates are sitting on the sidelines watching the internal battles taking place within Republican ranks. Three districts are in the center of the storm. Major Republican controversy can be found in the fifth (Northeast La.), the Seventh (Southwest La.) and the Third (Deep South La.) Republican candidates have a shot at winning all three. That is if they can get their act together.

In the Seventh District, two Louisiana state senators lead in recent polls. At the top is former Lake Charles Mayor and present Sen. Willie Mount. Her poll numbers are in the 30s and she is presently in the best position for a run off spot. Right behind her (22%) is Lafayette Sen. Don Cravens, the only African American candidate in the race.

Two Republicans, both popular within party ranks, cause a dilemma for the state GOP. Lafayette school board member David Thibodaux is running for the fourth time, and feels he has "paid his dues" so as to command party support. He has about 17% of the vote at the present time. But newcomer Dr. Charles Boustany has raised around \$500,000 (as compared to Thibodaux's \$17,000). And although he is relatively unknown, the GOP feels he has the best shot to take this seat now being held by U. S. Senate candidate Chris John.

The state and national GOP are behind Boustany, who interestingly is married to the niece of former Gov. Edwin Edwards. Look for an effort to get the two Republicans together next week as U.S. House Speaker Dennis Haslet comes to town. He will try to broker a deal to get Thibodaux out of the race and to support Boustany. A key player who realizes the stakes involved is Lafayette Councilman Mark Mouton. "With one strong Republican candidate, we have an excellent change of winning this seat. I would also like to have the congressman based out of Lafayette," say Mouton. "With two candidates, we have an uphill battle."

In the 5th District (Northeast La.), the national and state GOP wishes former state representative Jock Scott would go away. But he's far from such an idea. The Alexandria attorney will personally argue an appeal to the state supreme court asking the Justices to throw out the candidacy of incumbent Cong. Rodney Alexander.

Scott jumped into this race when Alexander was a democrat. He feels he's earned the spot and Alexander should be sent packing. And waiting in the wings with a close eye on the situation is Lee Fletcher, who lost this race by a whisker to Alexander two year ago. If qualifications open back up, look for Fletcher to jump in. Former Congressman Clyde Holloway is telling friends the same thing. Four major republicans running? Boy would that be a barn burner. Look for the Supremes to rule by the first of next week.

On to the Third District where the national and state hierarchy hope New Iberia State Sen. Craig Romero would also fade away from the scene and support young Billy Tauzin, son of the present incumbent.. Fat chance says Craig who has signed up al 15 Republican State Senators to join in his behalf. Some Republican state central committee members

have even resigned over the Tauzin support. Romero is well funded (almost \$500,000), and is in the race to stay. This internal party struggle has kept the four major democratic candidates in the shadows for the time being. Look for Romero's T.V., starting next week, to be tough on Tauzin. "This is not England," says Romero. "We don't anoint a successor in the Third District."

And in the U. S. Senate race, Republican David Vitter has made some strong moves in the past three weeks. He's read the polls. There's not as many people in North Louisiana but that's where a major number of undecideds are located. Several recent polls show a 22% undecided vote statewide. But this number jumps to 36% in the northern part of the state.

No halfway moves for Brother Dave. He ups and moves his whole family to Alexandria for the duration of the campaign. (Hopefully, if he does win, he won't pick up and move permanently to Washington like everyone else seems to do.) Vitter is also on T.V... statewide, but more heavily up north. His "northern" strategy seems to be of help as his poll numbers are moving up. Not in the 40s like some in the GOP are touting. But in the high 30s, a good jump from a month ago.

I called my favorite bookie, Vinnie, to check up on the latest odds. He had Vitter at 3/1 a month ago. "The guy's made some moves. Those right wing talk shows are playing him up big recently. He's the only game in town for the Republicans. He has no party competition." Vinnie says. "Another factor is Bush. The Prez will carry Louisiana. As his numbers go up, this helps Vitter. Of course the runoff's another story. Vitter needs a Bush victory nationally to help him against the democrat that makes the runoff."

"So Vinnie, how do you see the race now?" I ask.

"I gave Vitter 3/1 last month. But he's firmin' up his base. If Bush wins, I say 2/1. If Bush loses, it's another story."

"So how about the Democrats running?" I ask.

"That will take me some time to analyze. Maybe next week. I'm busy. Gotta go. Don't you realize gameday is almost here. Gotta lotta calls to return. LSU's an 18 1/2 point favorite. I hope that's not too much. Maybe we can talk about the Democrats next week."

Maybe we will.

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Prison Reform? Who cares.

Did you read about the report last week issued by the independent panel headed by former Defense Secretary James Schlesinger on prison abuse at Iraq's Abu Ghraib prison? I'm sure you didn't. There was barely a mention in the local press. The report

describes the abuse as “acts of brutality and purposeless sadism.” Numerous instances of murder, rape, and torture. And then many of those accused and tortured were released because of no evidence against them. Many prisoners were picked up in “sweeps” through local communities in Iraq and held for routine questioning.

And did you see Ted Koppel’s “Nightline” last Thursday night? The whole program was on the physical and mental abuse and torture that takes place regularly in U.S. prisons. I watched. But I’ll bet most other viewers did not.

You see, even the most caring, concerned citizens have little sympathy for anyone behind bars. Someone in prison deserves to be there, and what ever happens “they no doubt deserve.” Unless you or your family is touched in a direct and personal way, what goes on in a prison just isn’t relevant to your life. I understand this well.

There is an extremely limited constituency for those behind bars. Only their family really cares about the treatment they receive. America has 4% of the world’s population and 25% of the worldwide prison population. In prison, one becomes a part of a disposable population that is irrelevant to the rest of the country.

Just hope and pray that no one you care about ends up behind bars, even in a U.S. prison. You won’t be pleased what you will then see first hand on a regular basis.

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“Politicians are interested in people. Not that  
this is always a virtue. Fleas are interested in dogs.”

PJ O’Rourke

“You can get much further with a kind word  
and a gun than you can with a kind word alone.”

Al Capone

Peace and Justice.

Jim Brown