

2006 Races Begin to Take Shape

By Carol Tobias
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Congressional primaries will begin in eight months, with the general election still 16 months away. However, several congressional races are already taking shape, with candidates declaring and campaigns well under way.

To date, four senators have announced that they will not seek re-election when their terms expire in 2006. They are pro-abortion Senator Paul Sarbanes (D-Md.), pro-abortion Senator Mark Dayton (D-Mn.), pro-life Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist (R-Tn.), and pro-abortion Senator Jim Jeffords (Ind-Vt.).

Several candidates, including pro-abortion Congressman Benjamin Cardin and pro-abortion former Congressman Kweisi Mfume, are actively seeking the Democratic nomination for the Senate seat in Maryland. Others are still in the exploratory stage.

Cardin and Mfume were both elected to Congress in 1986. Cardin has continued to serve, while Mfume stepped down in 1996 to take over as president of the NAACP. Mfume resigned that post in December 2004 and is now seeking the Senate seat. Pro-abortion Congressman Chris Van Hollen (D) is also considering a run for the nomination.

On the Republican side, pro-life Lt. Governor Michael Steele is exploring a run, but has not made public any decision.

For Dayton's seat in Minnesota, Republican Party leaders, including pro-life Governor Tim Pawlenty and pro-life Senator Norm Coleman, quickly coalesced behind pro-life Congressman Mark Kennedy. Kennedy is not expected to have strong opposition in seeking his party's nomination. He spoke at NRLC's national convention last month, as did Gov. Pawlenty.

Democrats in Minnesota may have a multi-candidate primary as several

candidates seem determined to seek the nomination. Pro-abortion community activist Patty Wetterling, who ran against Kennedy for the congressional seat in 2004, and pro-abortion Hennepin County Attorney Amy Klobuchar are both seeking the nomination, along with businessman Kelly Doran.

Both Wetterling and Klobuchar are hoping to obtain support from EMILY's List, an organization that helps Democratic women candidates

pro-life state Rep. Beth Harwell are also in the running, although Harwell is being encouraged to jump into the governor's race instead.

Pro-abortion Congressman Bernie Sanders, the only Independent socialist in Congress, has announced that he will seek the open Jeffords Senate seat in Vermont. He will likely have the backing of the Democratic Party. Pro-life Lt. Governor Brian Dubie (R) is considering the race, but has not made a decision yet.

pro-abortion Senator Bill Nelson (D). There are others looking at the race, so Harris may have opposition in the primary.

While several members of the U.S. House are retiring or are running for another office, a pro-life giant will not be back after next year. Pro-life Congressman Henry Hyde, often described as the most eloquent champion in Congress for unborn children, will be stepping down after 32 years in the House.



Rep. Mark Kennedy (R-Mn)



Jean Schmidt



Rep. Henry Hyde (R-Il)

who oppose any limits on abortion, including a ban on partial-birth abortion.

Tennessee has the opposite situation, as the Democrats are quickly coalescing behind pro-abortion Congressman Harold Ford, Jr., while several Republicans are seeking their party's nomination. However, Ford does not have a clear path to the primary as pro-abortion state Senator Rosalind Kurita is also seeking the nomination.

On the Republican side, pro-life former Congressmen Ed Bryant and Van Hilleary are running for the seat. Chattanooga mayor Bob Corker and

One of the incumbent senators who will face a tough re-election campaign is pro-life Republican Rick Santorum of Pennsylvania. Santorum is being challenged by Democratic state Treasurer Bob Casey, Jr. Casey is the son of late pro-life Governor Bob Casey. Although Casey is pro-life, he has stated his belief that the Democratic minority in the Senate should be able to filibuster judicial nominees put forward by pro-life President George W. Bush.

In Florida, pro-life Congresswoman Katherine Harris has announced that she will seek the Republican nomination to run against incumbent

Elected to Congress in 1974, Congressman Hyde quickly became a recognized leader of the pro-life movement with his successful efforts to stop the use of taxpayer dollars for abortion through the Hyde amendment.

Special Elections

There is currently an open House seat in Ohio. President Bush tapped pro-life Congressman Rob Portman (R) to be the next U.S. Trade Representative. Portman resigned his House seat in April after being

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confirmed to the new post by the U.S. Senate.

A primary election was held on June 14. Democrats nominated pro-abortion attorney Paul Hackett, while Republicans nominated pro-life Jean Schmidt. Schmidt is a former state representative and on a temporary leave of absence from her position as president of Cincinnati Right to Life. The district is heavily Republican and Schmidt is considered a strong favorite to win the election on August 2.

Another congressional seat may open up as President Bush has nominated pro-life Congressman Chris Cox (R) to be chairman of the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission. In this heavily Republican district, several candidates have announced their intention to run, but Cox is not expected to resign until after he is confirmed by the Senate.

A lot of the field is known and a lot of candidates are active, but in politics things can change quickly. Stay tuned!