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.

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!