



LEGISLATIVE COLUMN

By PAUL FOGLEMAN, Editor

North Carolina's 10th Congressional District includes a major concentration of hosiery manufacturing. With the retirement of eight-terms Rep. T. Cass Ballenger, voters will be looking especially hard at candidates in the Republican primary.

George Moretz, chairman of Carolina Mills in Maiden, and State Rep. Patrick McHenry, 28-year old resident of Gastonia, announced for the seat soon after Rep. Ballenger told a Hickory radio audience he is stepping down. State Sen. Austin Allran also has said he is eyeing the seat.

The economy will be the issue in the campaign, according to announcement statements from the candidates. Rising healthcare costs also are hitting small and medium-sized businesses.

Voter registration favors Republicans in the district. In 2001, 42.4 percent were registered as Republicans, 41.1 as Democrats and 16.5 as independents. Democrat Ron Daugherty waged an aggressive campaign in 2002, based on trade issues, but received only 38 percent of ballots.



U.S. Congressional races are expensive---and getting more so.

In the North Carolina 8th District, represented by Robin Hayes, the 2002 expenditures by Hayes and his Democratic opponent reached \$2.92 million--\$19.77 for every vote cast. In the 11th District, Rep. Charles Taylor and his Democratic opponent spent a combined \$2 million, an average of almost \$10 per vote. In the new 13th District, candidates shelled out \$1.4 million, \$7.67 per vote.

Money is important to candidates who win.



With the filing for political offices just weeks away, several veteran state representatives have announced their retirement. Among them are prominent Democrats who kept the Chamber on a moderate path--Gordon Allen of Person, Stan Fox of Granville, Donald Bonner of Robeson.

Senator Steve Metcalf of Buncombe who has openly revealed plans to become a lobbyist, also will not seek reelection this year.

If the courts throw out the redistricting plan, look for other retirements.

Rep. Leslie Cox of Lee County who lost his seat in 2002 is raising money for a comeback bid. Rep. Monroe Buchanan of Mitchell County also reportedly is planning to seek a seat he lost in 2002.

*Thanksgiving dinner shuts the eyes
And in my dreams the time does fly
I see the difficulties of 03
And a future we want to see*

*Jobs went to China and Vietnam
The federal trade policy was a sham
Things will look better in days to come
And we can't wait for 04 to begin its run...*

So began the holiday greetings from N.C. State Sen. Walter Dalton and his family and his thoughts echoed the thoughts of many. Dalton's home district has been hit hard by the loss of textiles and furniture jobs. A co-chairman of Senate Appropriation Committee, Sen. Dalton has supported programs to help manufacturing, including the HTC and the Manufacturing Extension Partnership funds for N.C. State University.

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