

2 battle Brown in GOP contest

Ex-aide, newcomer seek to unseat 4-term congressman

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By Zane Wilson

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U.S. Rep. Henry Brown, a well-financed four-term, is seeking to hold his place for the Republican nomination for re-election against two challengers from opposite ends of the district.

His challengers are Paul V. Norris, 44, a political newcomer from James Island near Charleston, and Katherine Jenerette, 40, a former aide of Brown's who lives in North Myrtle Beach. Neither has the funds to match Brown's, but both have been vigorously campaigning while Brown has made few campaign appearances.

Brown, of Hanahan, has won easily since his first victory in 2000. He has built on his years of contacts as a former member of the state House of Representatives, where he chaired the budget-writing Ways and Means Committee.

With \$1.2 million in cash on hand as of the end of May, he far outstrips the hopefuls from both parties and is at least financially prepared for both the primary and general election campaigns.

At 72, Brown said he still has plenty of energy, enjoys what he does, and is not ready to give it up.

"We've worked hard for our constituents here in the 1st Congressional District, and we hope that will resonate with how people vote," he said.

Norris raised about \$8,000 in donations and put in some of his own money. He had spent about \$24,000 by the end of May. Jenerette reported having a little more than \$3,000, most of which was spent on her filing fee.

Norris said Brown represents the party's old guard and that people are looking for new ideas. Republicans like Brown have a good chance of losing to Democrats in November, he said.

"Brown is the type of legislator who is running on his record," Norris said. "He has a vision for the past and I have a vision for the future."

Jenerette was not available for an interview but says on her Web site that the Democrats have the majority so the district needs someone "who's more aggressive and will take the ball and run."

Brown says that is what he has been doing. He has been active especially with transportation issues.

He was able to get the first federal money allocated for Interstate 73 "and it wasn't even a line on the map," Brown said. The road that will be the first interstate into Horry County now has received a total of \$91 million with most of the federal delegation working together on it.

He has also gotten earmarks to help keep the port of Georgetown's channel and the Intracoastal Waterway dredged, and he has pressed for a change in a high-speed rail plan that would include Myrtle Beach.

As a member of the Transportation Committee, he is in a position to get more funds for I-73 as well as the ports and waterways, Brown said.

And as a member of the Veterans Affairs Committee, he is in a position to help the district's veteran-heavy population, he said. He helped get money to expand the clinic at Myrtle Beach and to modernize the hospital in Charleston.

In the election two years ago, opponents criticized the plan that Brown participated in that merged some of the veterans' hospital operations with the Medical University of South Carolina. Brown insists the move brought more doctors, specialists and equipment to veterans' care.

He has also been some under fire for voting against a new veterans' benefits bill, but said his action was wrongly portrayed. He said he had to vote against one version of the bill because it included a tax increase, and he will vote for a better version expected soon.

Norris, owner of propane gas businesses and a registered mechanical engineer, said his kind of analytical thinking is needed in Washington and that he has studied all the issues.

"I could stand up and debate Barack Obama right now on any issue," he said.

Norris said he believes the country is headed in the wrong direction and that for the sake of his two teenage children he wanted to get involved.

"I have to try, I just have to try," he said.

Jenerette is not a political newcomer. She has tried for three other elective positions since 1998, when she ran for school board.

Four years ago, she carried the Horry County portion of state Senate District 28, but lost to incumbent Democrat Dick Elliott.

"While I know the difficulties of making change happen in Washington as a congressman, I know that my realistic impact can be through direct service to the people and the businesses in our district," she said in a statement on her Web site.

Jenerette is an Army veteran and teaches history at Southeastern Community College. She and her husband, Van Jenerette, both worked as aides to Brown.

Van Jenerette ran against Brown in the 2000 primary. He was in the news earlier this year after being charged with sexual misconduct with a daughter from a previous marriage.

Question & Answer

Question | What is the most pressing issue facing this district, and how will you address it?

Henry Brown | Transportation needs. I have earmarked money for Interstate 73, dredging in the Georgetown port channel and Intracoastal Waterway, and am working for high-speed rail to Myrtle Beach and for more mass-transit facilities.

Katherine Jenerette | Look no further than the gas pump; coastal Carolina's future is tied directly to the price of gas and the economic well being of the rest of the country who we want to come here and spend their money. Congress is to blame and Congress needs to fix it; drill more and get rid of the federal gasoline tax.

Paul V. Norris | Energy costs and a stumbling economy. Republican Party forgot their conservative principles and "acted like pork-barrel feasting Democrats." Must have more exploration, pay down national debt to increase value of dollar, get electricity into our transportation infrastructure, and have aggressive conservation.