

Campbell's revised plans create a stir among Republicans

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by Bruce Smith

Last week's announcement by State Representative Tom Campbell (R-Roy) that he is abandoning his 2010 bid to unseat U.S. Congressman Adam Smith (D-Tacoma) is causing a stir in the ranks of the local Republican Party.

Campbell announced Aug. 31 that he will forego Congress, and instead run for reelection as state representative from the 2nd Legislative District.

Perhaps sensing that Campbell's congressional pursuit would leave his state position open, political newcomers Matt Hamilton and J.T. Wilcox had announced their candidacies last June. Both are Republicans and now, with Campbell's decision, are scheduled to face the incumbent in a 2010 primary.

Hamilton, the current 2nd LD Republican club chairperson, reacted prudently when he heard the news.

"I'm still running until the voters say otherwise," he told The Dispatch in an email.

Nevertheless, Hamilton, who had actively supported Campbell's congressional bid, admitted he was surprised by Campbell's decision.

However, J.T. Wilcox, a member of the famous Wilcox dairy family, said he was "energized."

"I'm perfectly happy to run against Tom," J.T. said. "Tom's been in office since the early 1990s, and he has a record to defend."

Wilcox declared that Campbell has one of the most unfriendly voting records towards business of any Republican holding office, and stated, "His support of the state's recent health care bill helped raised L&I rates for businesses to some of the highest levels in the country."

Campbell counters such charges by saying, "I'm not a business lobbyist. I work for the people of the 2nd District, and I vote in whatever way is best for them."

Wilcox also challenges Campbell's "in and out" status, Campbell being a Republican who was once a Democrat.

Again, Campbell responds by touting his position as the only Republican to hold a committee chairpersonship in the Democratic-controlled state house.

"That shows I can work with both parties," said Campbell. "I'm in Olympia to get things done that help people, not spout any particular political ideology."

Campbell says that he wants to stay in Olympia and see the successful conclusion of several projects he has begun, such as the Cross-Base Highway, and to improve accountability by doctors and medical centers, especially in regards to hospital-acquired infections such as MSRA.

As Chair of the Environmental Health Committee, Campbell also wants to establish higher standards to further protect the state's drinking waters. In addition, he also wants to stop the importation of toys and household appliances manufactured with toxic lead and other dangerous metals.