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HD47: Wooley, Pacheco in for a shot at Meyer

July 10th, 2008 by Derrick DePledge

Jessica Wooley, a former deputy attorney general and Legal Aid attorney, will announce this morning that she will run in the Democratic primary in state House District 47 (Lā'ie, Hau'ula, Punalu'u.)

Wooley is one of three Democrats considering a primary campaign for a chance at state Rep. Colleen Meyer, a Republican who has represented the district since 1994. Maria Pacheco, a Realtor and manager of condominiums at Kuilima Estates East, said yesterday afternoon that she will run. George Okuda, a Hawaiian Electric retiree and legislative aide who lost to Meyer in 2000 and 2002, has also pulled papers but could not be reached for comment about his plans yesterday.

Democrats have a solid 44 to 7 supermajority in the state House and much of the political interest this year will be over whether state House Speaker Calvin Say, 20th (St. Louis Heights, Pālolo Valley, Wilhelmina Rise), can prevent dissidents from growing their numbers at the ballot box and threatening his leadership.

Some party insiders, however, said Wooley is a promising candidate and that if the party were to go after House Republicans Meyer may be the best target because she is the most conservative.

"I decided to run because I think our district really needs somebody who is effective. We've been waiting a long time, and this year is the year for change," said Wooley, who plans a news conference this morning at the state Capitol.

Wooley, who lives in Ka'alae, is married to David Henkin, an environmental attorney who ran unsuccessfully for lieutenant governor in the Democratic primary in 2006.

Wooley said she is a progressive who would give voters a diametrical choice.

Meyer, who was unopposed in 2006, said she may be a target this year because of her outspoken views as minority floor leader, particularly against the disproportionate influence of labor unions.

"My thoughts are we have way too many Democrats. At 44 to 7, it's not a healthy mix," she said. "We need different points of view."

Meyer said she continues to run because she sees a lack of a two-party system. "I don't think it's healthy for the state of Hawai'i."

Referring to Wooley, Meyer said she does not believe the House needs more attorneys who would be obstacles to tort reform.

This entry was posted on Thursday, July 10th, 2008 at 12:06 am and is filed under Uncategorized. You can follow any responses to this entry through the RSS 2.0 feed. You can leave a response, or trackback from your own site.