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## Parker on Politics: FHP trooper lines up for state House race

### Fort Myers resident considers campaign

*By Betty Parker  
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Another candidate for the state House District 73 seat held by Rep. Nick Thompson, R-Fort Myers - who's running for a circuit judge post-is in the wings: John Schultz, a Florida Highway Patrol trooper who does security for Lt. Gov. Jeff Kottkamp.

Schultz is a Fort Myers resident, with family in the area, and spends much of his time traveling with the lieutenant governor.

In an e-mail sent this week to friends, his wife, Kelly Schultz, said they had considered running for office for some time. Thompson's unexpected departure from the House opened the possibility of running sooner rather than later.

"Our next step before making it official is to reach out to our personal network to determine what financial support we will be able to raise ourselves," she wrote. Because donations can't be accepted until proper accounts are opened and papers filed, she noted they are now just trying to get an idea of what they might be able to raise before actually collecting checks.

"I believe John will make a great House representative and with your help we can make it happen," she wrote.

Neither John Schultz, who's 39 and a Republican, nor Kelly Schultz, returned calls and e-mails asking for comment. Kottkamp is running for Florida attorney general, a post that doesn't receive the same protection as the lieutenant governor.

The likelihood of Schultz's entry in the race caused a buzz among some Republicans, who found his relationship with Kottkamp - who's also had an ally in Matt Caldwell, another Republican running for the same seat - intriguing.

"It's an open seat," Caldwell said of Schultz's possible candidacy, and how the two might share some of the same supporters. "I expect it will be a very lively campaign."

Also in the race are Republican Jason Moon, an administrator with 21st Century Oncology, and Democratic businessman Cole Peacock.

## Caldwell confident

House candidate Caldwell gave a rundown on his campaign platform to members of Businesspeople United for Political Action this week.

Some of his key points and statements included:

- General support for offshore oil drilling, as part of a comprehensive energy policy that includes solar and nuclear power, which he believes is much safer.
- Opposition to the new law that allows police to stop drivers who fail to wear seat belts. Caldwell said he was "aghast" that became a primary offense, and adults should be able to choose whether to use them.
- The numerous fire districts that cover Lee County are "a remnant of an older, rural county," and some districts - he declined to say which ones - should be consolidated.
- Economic recovery will be much longer than most people believe, and Lee County should rely on tourism and agriculture to rebound, along with encouraging businesses such as those that assemble objects from components shipped into the area. He said he's especially concerned about the loss of agricultural land, which presents a security threat in lowering America's ability to feed itself.
- Although another candidate in the race, Jason Moon, raised big money - far more than other candidates - in his campaign for a hospital board seat, Caldwell said Moon still lost. "Television ads are wasteful for this race," Caldwell said, explaining ads' cost covers their reach throughout Southwest Florida, while the House race only involves part of Lee County. "This House race is going to be door-to-door. I'm door-knocking all the way."
- Saying politics involves the possible, not the perfect, Caldwell said his biggest challenge if elected is he'll find it hard to accomplish anything "because I'm too principled."

## Race a factor

Supporters of single-member districts for the Lee County commission want to change the method of letting every county voter have a say on all five commission members to single-member districts, or letting residents vote for only one commissioner who would represent that particular district.

Supporters say that would put the commissioners closer to the people who elect them, and make it easier for candidates to run for that office. Instead of having to campaign before all 341,700 county voters, each candidate would only have to reach about 68,340 votes in a single district, or one-fifth the total.

Supporters also say that would make it easier for minorities to get elected, which leads to interesting findings about minority voter registration in Lee County.

The numbers aren't perfect - people are asked for that information when they register to vote, but they are not required to give it - but they're the best data available from the Lee County Supervisor of Elections office.

Hispanic voters outnumber blacks by a sizable amount: There are 23,230 Hispanic voters, and 17,230 black voters, for a total of 40,460 black and Hispanic voters spread throughout Lee County. Other minorities, including Asians, American Indians, and those who say they are something other than Caucasian, total about 14,000.

Other than being easier for anyone to campaign before a smaller group, some people question how dividing those relatively small numbers of minority voters into five or more single districts can help get more elected.

Leaders of a group formed to push single-member districts, the Coalition for Common-Sense Government, say they're working on answers and have a Web site in development. Chairman Raymond Rodrigues, who helped organize the group, estimated they have 15-20 members, including the recently elected officers.

Besides himself as chairman, Joan Patterson, a Democrat, is vice-chair; Steve Sherman, another Democrat who represents the NAACP here, is secretary; and Kim Hawk, a Libertarian, is treasurer. Rodrigues is an active Republican who's run unsuccessfully for county offices in the past.

Although Republican leaders opposed single-member districts when the idea was pushed by Democrats about 12 years ago, several local GOP officials now support the idea, said Rodrigues, attributing the change to different leadership.

The Republican Executive Committee is expected to vote on the matter soon.

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