

5th Dist. hopefuls focus on funding ***Burton raises \$253,000, Messer leads challengers with more than \$200,000.***

By Ken de la Bastide

Tribune enterprise editor
July 19, 2009

As in any political campaign, fundraising will be crucial to the four declared candidates seeking to wrestle the nomination away from 5th District incumbent Dan Burton in the Republican Party primary.

Luke Messer, State Rep. Mike Murphy, 2008 challenger John McGoff and Brose McVey will all challenge Burton, who is seeking a 15th term.

Messer, the former executive director of the Indiana Republican Party, appears to be the main opponent to Burton's re-election bid. According to the campaign finance reports filed with the Federal Election Commission for the first half of 2009, Messer has been able to raise the most of any of the challengers.

Messer has raised \$205,282 and spent \$29,939 on his campaign. Murphy has raised \$103,252 and spent \$22,496; McGoff raised \$40,734 and expended \$8,308; and McVey has generated \$26,165 while spending \$5,679.

For the same time period, Burton raised \$253,402 while spending \$166,150, and has \$418,397 on hand for the 2010 campaign, including money left over from his 2008 campaign. John Donnelly, spokesman for Burton, said the congressman is concentrating on representing the 5th District and is not concerned about his potential opponents' fundraising activities.

Craig Dunn, chairman of the Howard County Republican Party, said Burton could use his money to purchase advertisements in the Indianapolis media market, which would provide an edge over his lesser known challengers. He also pointed out that Murphy has so far been limited in fundraising because the General Assembly was in session.

Dunn said name recognition will be crucial to the challengers in Indianapolis and Hamilton County. The Howard County Republican Party and Dunn support Burton's re-election bid, and Dunn has previously said spending should be focused on winning control of the Indiana House in the 2010 election cycle.

Messer's campaign took in \$189,300 from individuals, however, his campaign did not provide a detailed list of contributors according to the FEC Web site. Murphy received \$93,537 from individuals, including a \$2,500 contribution from Jim Schellinger, who lost the 2008 Democrat Party nomination for governor to Jill Long Thompson. McVey's report showed contributions from individuals in the amount of \$17,795, and McGoff showed donations of \$30,350 from individuals. Neither campaign supplied a donor list to the FEC.

"I'm humbled by the level of support we've received from hundreds of Hoosiers over the last few months," Messer said in a press statement. "We still have a lot of work to do, but we're off to a great start not only in terms of fundraising but also in the level of grassroots support we've received in the district."