

Messer enters mix for 6th



Luke Messer (center) talks with some young supporters, including daughter Emma (left), just after he announced Tuesday that he will run for the 6th District congressional seat in 2012. Messer made the proclamation outside Morristown's CGS Services, 2920 E.

U.S. 52. Andrea Smithson photo

Shelbyville politician will run for Congress in 2012

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Published: Wednesday, May 25, 2011 7:12 AM US/eastern

MORRISTOWN -- Luke Messer made it official Tuesday, ending weeks of speculation surrounding his potential as a U.S. Congressman for the Shelby County area.

"Today, I announce my candidacy for the United States Congress in Indiana's 6th District," he said before a small crowd of supporters at Morristown's CGS Systems late Tuesday morning. "This district is my home ... and it would be an honor to serve this district as a member of Congress."

The Shelbyville resident and Republican politician had been the center of speculation on the race after incumbent Congressman Mike Pence announced he will run for governor of Indiana in 2012, abandoning his Washington job. Messer previously ran for Congress in 2010 in District 5, nearly unseating longtime representative Dan Burton.

But earlier this year, the district maps were redrawn, as they are each decade, and Shelby County was moved entirely into the 6th Congressional District.

"If I'm elected, I pledge to you, my first priority will be the voters of this district, to focus on their priorities," he said at the announcement.

Messer thanked Pence for his service to the district and said his conservative values line up with those of the congressman and Gov. Mitch Daniels. He touted small business development -- like the host CGS Services -- and fiscal belt tightening.

"Hoosiers want leaders who will put partisan politics aside," he said.

Messer's wife, Jennifer, told the crowd that her husband is more than up to the job.

"Mike Pence leaves big shoes to fill, but I think I know just the guy who can fill those shoes," she said.

The Messers live in Shelbyville with their three children — Emma, Ava and Hudson — all in attendance Tuesday. Luke Messer, 42, is a Greensburg native and former state representative for Shelby and Bartholomew counties from 2003 to 2006. He also was executive director for the Indiana Republican Party from 2001 to 2005.

He currently is employed as executive director of Hoosiers for Economic Growth, a nonprofit advocacy group that works to elect conservative candidates who are pro-growth and pro-education.

Messer said in a news release Tuesday that he will begin ramping up campaign efforts now, though the primary for the 2012 election is almost a year away.

"Over the coming weeks and months, we'll travel the district, meeting old friends and new," he said.

"We will build upon our grassroots team and work to earn the support of voters, activists, elected officials and party leaders.

"We're very excited," he added.

Shelby County's Republicans are lining up in support of the local candidate, as several were in attendance Tuesday. County chairman J.R. Showers said the Republican Central Committee is supporting Messer in the race.

"What would be better than to have a Congressman from Shelby County?" he said.

Messer joins another Shelbyville native, T.J. Thompson, and Columbus' Travis Hankins and Winchester businessman Don Bates Jr. in declaring their intentions to run in District 6 so far.

The new district lines include Bartholomew, Dearborn, Decatur, Delaware, Fayette, Franklin, Hancock, Henry, Jefferson, Jennings, Ohio, Randolph, Ripley, Rush, Scott, Switzerland, Union, Wayne and Shelby counties.