

Start Your Engines ... It's Time for the Fall 2010 Campaign Season to Begin!

By Sandra Slifer

Summer hasn't officially yet begun, but the fall campaign season is just around the corner. Candidate press releases will become a common occurrence in the newspapers and our mailboxes will soon be stuffed with campaign materials. It may seem as if we're still months away from the fall elections, but qualifying is July 7 – 9. The Congressional Primary is August 28 and the Parish/Local Open Primary Election is scheduled for Saturday, October 2. Any races not decided at the time of qualifying or during the October Primary will be determined on Tuesday, November 2 during the General Election.

In St. Tammany Parish, candidates will be qualifying to run in the October Primary in Abita Springs, Folsom, Pearl River, and the fifteen School Board seats.

Candidates qualifying for the October Primary in Tangipahoa include the nine School Board seats and all of the municipal offices in Hammond, Kentwood, and Tickfaw. Qualifying will also take place to fill the unexpired terms for Chief of Police in Independence and Justice of the Peace Ward 8.

Voters will also be asked to vote on a still-undetermined number of Constitutional Amendments on the October and November election dates. At minimum, there are six Constitutional Amendments from the 2009 Session (two on the October Ballot and four on the November Ballot). State Legislators filed eighty-eight bills in 2010 that would have required the Constitution to be amended if they all had passed. Thankfully, voters will only see a small number of these proposed amendments on the October or November Ballots.

Voters may also be asked to vote on a variety of local new or millage renewals and propositions on the October and/or November Ballots. The deadlines are July 23 and September 17 respectively for getting these measures on the ballots.

On the federal side, candidates will be running in each of the seven U.S. Congressional seats and one of the U.S. Senate seats. The schedule for the Congressional elections is as follows: the first Party Primary will be Saturday, August 28; the 2nd Party Primary, if required, will be on Saturday, October 2; and the Congressional Election is scheduled for Tuesday, November 2. Only registered Republicans are allowed to vote in the Republican Primary races. Unaffiliated voters are allowed to vote in the Democratic, Green, and Libertarian Primary elections. All voters are allowed to vote in the November General Election.

Currently, the election schedule for the Congressional seats retains the closed primary system, however, legislation has passed the Louisiana Senate and House that eliminates the closed primary system in future years. The Senate Bill ended the closed primary system this year and the House version kept it in place for this fall's elections, but eliminated it in future years. It is estimated that the change, if approved by both houses and the Governor, will save the state up to \$5.8 to \$6.6 million per Congressional election cycle. HB 292 is pending action in the Conference Committee so we'll soon learn whether or not Congressional elections will return to the Open Primary system or not.

The League of Women Voters is, of course, a nonpartisan political organization. We neither endorse nor oppose any candidate or political party. We encourage voters to fully participate in all phases of the democratic process. This includes urging voters to learn about the duties and responsibilities for the many elected offices and to be sufficiently prepared to run for office. The time is fast approaching when we'll know who is running for these offices and what changes, if any, we'll see in governance. The League will be conducting candidate forums for all contested seats in St. Tammany Parish. Schedules will be released shortly after qualifying ends. Please visit our website at www.lwvst.info for complete schedules and Online Voter Guides, as they are published.

Now Gentlemen and Ladies, let the campaigns begin!

Election Summary

Qualifying: July 7 – 9

First Party Primary-Congressional: August 28

Early Voting: August 14 – 21

Second Party Primary-Congressional (if needed) and Open Primary: October 2

Early Voting: September 18 – 25

Open General/Congressional: November 2

Early Voting: October 19 – 26