Congressional races in full swing locally

Challengers are taking on Cantor, Scott and Forbes

BY OLYMPIA MEOLA
Richmond Times-Dispatch

Three men are vying for the Democratic nomination to challenge House Majority Leader Eric Cantor, R-7th, in the November election.

David Hunsicker, a retired Air Force member and real estate broker from Orange County; Jim Phillips, an attorney and college professor; and E. Wayne Powell, an attorney and retired Army colonel, want their party's backing in the general election. Each has announced efforts to seek the party's nod to take on the second-highest ranking Republican in the House of Representatives.

Cantor, who will seek re-election, will be "very focused this year on helping create opportunity for small businesses to create jobs and reducing the deficit," said his political strategist, Ray Allen.

David Hunsicker is an Air Force retiree who has worked as a real estate broker.

Jim Phillips teaches at the University of Richmond and Virginia State University.

E. Wayne Powell spent 30 years in the Army and commanded an intelligence unit.

Each party decides its nomination process, be it a primary or another method. Additional candidates could enter Virginia's 2012 congressional contests.

If a party chooses a primary, which is conducted by the state, it is scheduled to be held June 12 — at least for now. Because of a delayed congressional redistricting, there's an effort in the General Assembly to push the primary back to August.

Still, a crop of hopefuls in congressional districts around the Richmond area have launched bids, including in the 3rd District, where Rep. Robert C. "Bobby" Scott, a Democrat, is running for re-election.

"Our focus is going to be on creating jobs, responsible budgeting, protecting Social Security and Medicare," he said.

One of Scott's Republican opponents, Dean Longo of Hampton Roads, retired from the Air Force and started a consulting firm. Another Republican, Chuck Smith, an attorney from Virginia Beach, challenged Scott in 2010 and says he intends to announce that he will run again.

Rep. J. Randy Forbes, R-4th, who is running for

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re-election, says the nation and his district's residents face a number of challenges and "we need someone that can bring people together, not divide Americans for political gain."

"My campaign will focus on common-sense solutions that increase economic freedom for all Americans and create a more efficient, effective government," he said.

Bonnie Girard of Petersburg is challenging Forbes for the Republican nomination. Girard lived in China for years on and off and consults with businesses on how to safely conduct work in China. She said she wants to help attract investment to the 4th District.

"One of the roles of a congressperson is to shamelessly showcase their district and to market their district to outside investors," she said.

Chesapeake City Council member Ella Ward, a retired teacher, is seeking the Democratic nomination in the 4th. Ward wants to shore up Social Security, help attract jobs to the district and make sure residents have access to strong education and job-skills training.

"We have not seen a real push for things that really help protect the middle-class Americans, and that's one of the reasons why I have chosen to run," she said.

In the 7th, Hunsicker says he supports President Barack Obama's jobs plan, wants to protect Social Security and Medicare, and help students who graduate college with debt.

"We cannot saddle our students with a mortgage payment when they get out of college," he said.

Phillips teaches law at the University of Richmond and business at Virginia State University. He is stressing his experience in mediation and conflict-resolution work.

"The politics of impasse and stalemate and playing political 'gotcha' has got to stop, and we've got to find new ways of working across the aisle to find complex solutions to complex problems," he said.

Powell, who spent 30 years in the Army and commanded an intelligence unit after Sept. 11, says he has the experience and temperament to help.

"I've been a lot of different places and dealt with different cultures and I never had any problem getting my mission accomplished," he said. "I see people who can't even talk to people in a different party."

omeola@timesdispatch.com
(804) 649-6812