

Four seek vacant House seat in District 69

BY WILL SENTELL

Capitol news bureau

Four Republicans are bidding for a House seat that is being vacated by Rep. Gary Beard, who is running for lieutenant governor.

The contenders in House District 69 are Bill Benedetto, Brian P. McNabb, Erich Ponti and Joseph R. "Bob" Thibodeaux.

The district stretches from the corner of Government Street and Jefferson Highway southeast across East Baton Rouge Parish to the Amite River between Harrell's Ferry Road and Tiger Bend Road. It includes the neighborhoods of Westminster, Inniswold and Shenandoah.

Benedetto, who is retired, said one of his key campaign issues is finding a way to improve roads and bridges.

"That is something that is on just about everybody's mind," he said.

Repairing research and development capabilities in the LSU system since the hurricanes is another goal, Benedetto said.

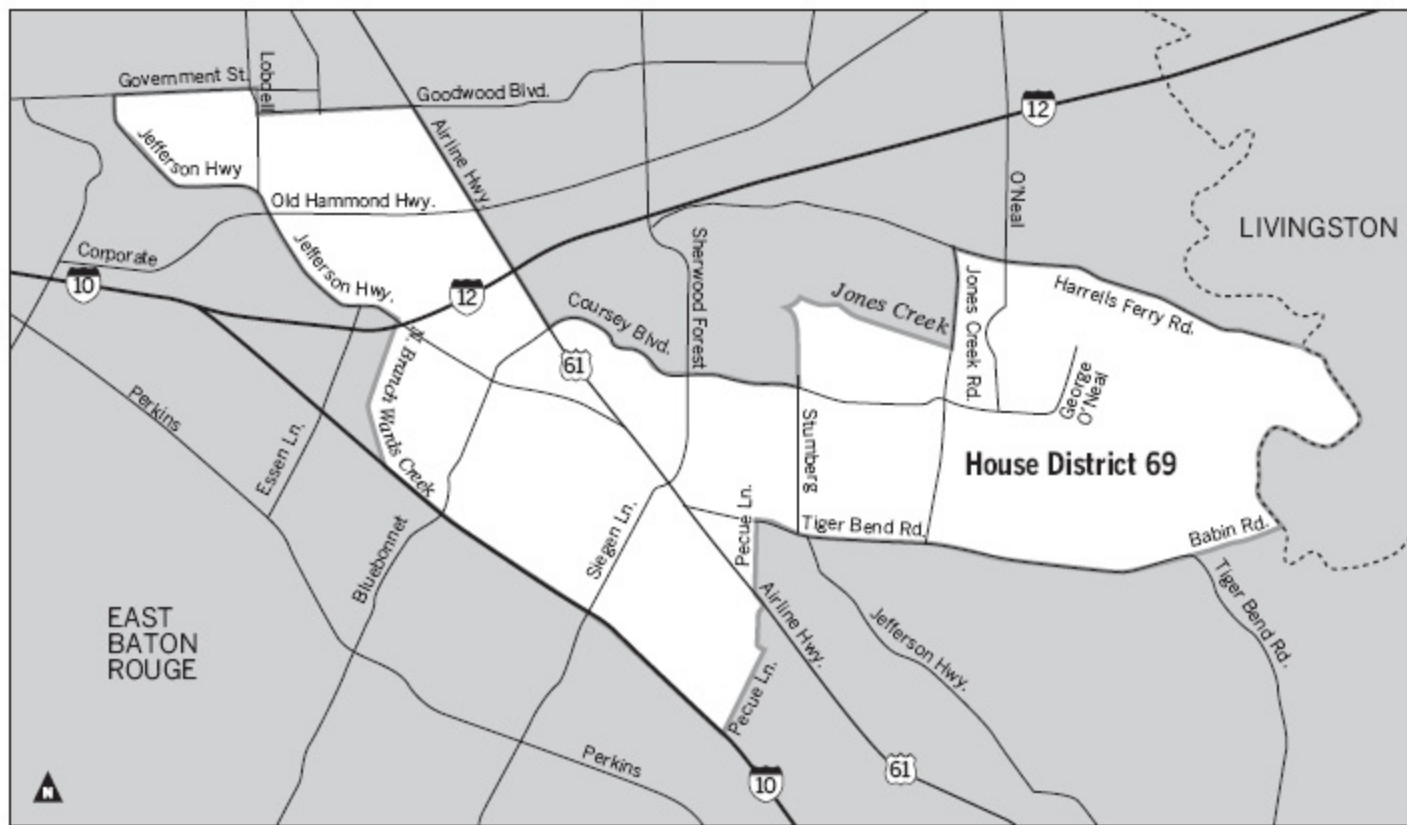
McNabb, former political director for the Louisiana Republican Party, said the state has a dire need for ethics reforms. McNabb also said the state can do a better job of spending on education, transportation and economic development.

Thibodeaux, who is retired, said he wants to apply his 30 years of business experience to state operations and to push for improved ethics.

"We have had a bad image for too long," he said.

Ponti, a remodeling contractor, said he would push for ethics transparency among state and local officials.

He said he would favor legislation that imposed personal financial disclosure rules on both state and local officials. Just



Advocate map by JOHN GIPSON



BILL BENEDETTO
Republican,
Baton Rouge
66, retired
EDUCATION:
Attended LSU
POLITICAL

EXPERIENCE: Vice-chairman,
BREC commission



BRIAN P. McNABB
Republican,
Baton Rouge
28, former
political
director,
Louisiana

Republican Party
EDUCATION: LSU, bachelor's
degree
POLITICAL EXPERIENCE: Former intern,
U.S. Rep. Richard Baker



ERIC PONTI
Republican,
Baton Rouge
42, remodeling
contractor
EDUCATION:
B.S. degree,
Northeast

Louisiana University (now University of Louisiana at Monroe)
POLITICAL EXPERIENCE: No previous political experience



JOSEPH R. 'BOB' THIBODEAUX
Republican,
Baton Rouge
60, retired
EDUCATION:
B.S. degree in
mechanical

engineering, McNeese State University
POLITICAL EXPERIENCE: No previous political experience

such a bill died during the legislative session that ended in June.

Thibodeaux also said that both state and local officials need to be covered but that the new rules should be spelled out in separate bills.

McNabb said he favors both state and local disclosure rules and would extend it to the governor's political appointees.

"They deal with taxpayer dollars as well," he said.

Benedetto also said personal disclosure laws should apply to state and local officials.

On health care, McNabb said Louisiana's charity hospital system is broken. Thibodeaux said he favors abolishing charity hospitals.

Ponti said the state's health-

care system needs to be studied but he does not favor closing charity hospitals.

Benedetto also criticized the current system.

"The care of indigent patients can be handled through the private hospital systems," he said.

Benedetto said that, if the state faces budget problems, he would favor looking at state job reductions through attrition, and other steps, rather than repealing any of the \$540 million in tax cuts and credits that lawmakers approved earlier this year.

McNabb said he would have to study the issue if budget problems arise. Thibodeaux said he would favor "scrubbing the budget" but did not spell out specific directions.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Total Registered Voters: 31,207
White: 27,462
Black: 2,381
Other: 1,364
Democrats: 9,822
Republicans: 14,593
Other: 6,792

PRECINCTS

East Baton Rouge Parish
Ward 1
Pct. 34 Goodwood Elementary School
Pct. 49 LaSalle Elementary School
Pct. 74 Tara High School
Pct. 80 Drusilla Lane Park Recreation Center
Pct. 99 Parkview Elementary School
Ward 3
Pct. 3 Woodlawn Baptist Church
Pct. 7 BREC Cedar Ridge Recre-

ation Center
Pct. 10 Lutheran Church of Our Savior
Pct. 11 Fire Station
Pct. 13 Jefferson Terrace Elementary School
Pct. 15 Shenandoah Elementary School
Pct. 16 The Runnels School
Pct. 17 Westminster Elementary School
Pct. 29 Jefferson Terrace Park Center
Pct. 31 Westminster Elementary School
Pct. 38 St. Michael Archangel High School
Pct. 39 Jefferson Terrace Elementary School
Pct. 41 Jones Creek Library
Pct. 43 Shenandoah Elementary School
Pct. 53 St. Michael the Archangel High School

Ponti reserved judgment.
"We need to look at the entire

structure to see if some services can be reduced," he said.