



Posted on Tue, Jul. 29, 2008

## Missouri House, 49th District: Two first-time candidates in primary-only contest

By BRIAN BURNES  
The Kansas City Star

The two Democratic candidates for Tuesday's primary in the 49th District of the Missouri House of Representatives have never run for political office.

Both, however, can boast of effective political experience in last November's elections.

Tom McDonald, 61, a retired Hallmark Cards Inc. employee, worked for the ballot question through which voters gave the Independence School District jurisdiction over several schools previously operated by the Kansas City School District.

Jason Parson, 34, an Iraq War veteran who lives in Kansas City and operates his own public-relations agency, helped mobilize support for the successful renewal of Kansas City's one-cent sales tax.

Both agree that economic development, education and health care represent the core issues in their district.

McDonald resides in northwestern Independence, which has been hit hard over many years by the departure of several major employers.

"That has had a direct impact on the quality of life here, and we need to see if we can recapture some of the losses we have suffered," McDonald said.

Parson said anyone driving through Independence and Raytown can count a high number of empty storefronts. "That equates to no taxes being paid," he said.

They also agreed on critical needs in education and health care. The quality of education, McDonald said, is directly related to economic development. Parson wants to see public schools "receive the funding they need."

Both also agreed on the need for affordable health care. McDonald said state government will be on the ground floor of any future initiatives. "The federal government is probably going to devise a plan of some type, but I think it really begins at the state level," he said.

Parson, meanwhile, said residents have suffered under recent state government leadership.

"The first thing I would work on is restoring health care to the 100,000 folks who have been removed (from insurance rolls) throughout the (Gov. Matt) Blunt tenure."

Porter, who spent one year over 2003 and 2004 in Iraq with the U.S. Army Reserve, said he would be especially alert to veterans' needs in Jefferson City.

The 49th District, running north to south, takes in portions of Independence, eastern Kansas City and Raytown. Incumbent Terry Young is not running for re-election.

**Name:** Tom McDonald

**Age:** 61

**City:** Independence

**Family:** With wife, Lois, 12 children, seven grandchildren

**Occupation:** Retired retail and industrial designer, Hallmark Cards Inc.

**Education:** Bachelor's degree, advertising communication

**Political experience:** Worked in advertising in various political campaigns in Iowa; helped garner support for the

recent ballot initiative giving Independence School District jurisdiction of several western Independence public schools.

**Support:** Missouri AFL-CIO, Greater Kansas City Building and Construction Trades Council

**Issue—Economic development:** McDonald says the state government should develop a closer relationship with economic-development officials at the local level. "Local economic-development people need a voice at the state level," he said.

**Issue—Education:** McDonald said effective economic development cannot be realized without the sufficient local educational resources to attract business. "The first thing that progressive companies look at is the quality of education," he said.

**Issue—Health care:** McDonald said any effective initiative for health-care reform will begin at the state level. "The states, in a concerted effort amongst themselves, are really going to drive the solution at the federal level," he said.

**Web site:** None

**Name:** Jason Parson

**Age:** 34

**City:** Kansas City

**Family:** Single; one son, Robert Jason Parson, II

**Occupation:** Operates Parson & Associates, public-relations firm

**Education:** Blue Springs High School; bachelor's degree, University of Missouri-Kansas City, 1999

**Political experience:** Worked for the successful renewal of the Kansas City one-cent sales tax

**Support:** the Greater Kansas City Women's Political Caucus, and NARAL Pro-Choice Missouri

**Issue—Economic development:** "Economic development is absolutely paramount," Porter said. Small businesses that no longer occupy storefronts in Independence and Raytown, he said, represent unpaid tax revenue that poses a threat of higher property taxes for homeowners.

**Issue—Education:** "I want to make sure our schools are properly funded," he said, adding that he would work with school districts to address issues. "Then I will take those issues to Jefferson City and eventually bring those resources back to the local level."

**Issue—Health care:** He wants to work to see universal health care for Missouri residents, especially children and the elderly, but also small-business owners. "The most important thing is finding those dollars necessary to make it affordable for all working people, such as small-business owners like myself....," he said.

**Web site:** [www.jasonparson.com](http://www.jasonparson.com)

---

To reach Brian Burnes, call 816-234-7804 or send e-mail to [bburnes@kcstar.com](mailto:bburnes@kcstar.com).

---

© 2007 Kansas City Star and wire service sources. All Rights Reserved. <http://www.kansascity.com>