

2004 A DAY AT THE RACES

6 hopefuls seek GOP's blessing

BY CHRIS COLETTA
STATE & NATIONAL EDITOR

Amid all the clamor about the presidential election, it was easy for Tar Heel voters to miss the hubbub of a dogfight that's closer to home: the gubernatorial race.

Gov. Mike Easley, a first-term Democrat, is up for re-election on November's ballot — but six Republican contenders, some of them familiar faces, are looking to take his spot in the Executive Mansion.

But of those six, only two can emerge from Tuesday's primary, in which all registered Republicans can vote at statewide election sites.

As it stands, former Charlotte Mayor Richard Vinroot, who is making his third run at Raleigh, and former N.C. Republican Party Chairman Bill Cobey are running first and second in most polls.

But four others are looking to erase their lead: former N.C. Senate Minority Leader Patrick Ballantine, N.C. Sen. Fern Shubert, R-Union, businessman George Little and Davie County Commissioner Dan Barrett.

Up until a few weeks ago, the race was mostly cordial, with the hopefuls spending more time criticizing Easley — "Tax Hike Mike" — than each other.

But in the last month, things have begun to heat up.

Shubert, for starters, has come under fire for running a controversial ad that all but equated Easley with the events of Sept. 11.

Cobey and Vinroot have begun to snipe at each other, with each accusing the other of using gutter tactics in order to gain an edge.

And campaign finance reports revealed that Easley has campaign coffers significantly more heavy than those of any of his Republican competitors.

That fact in particular could make Tuesday's primary even more important.

Unless Vinroot — or, for that matter, another contender — wins 40 percent of the vote Tuesday, the first- and second-place candidates will face off in a runoff Aug. 17.

That would give the winner rough-

ly 2 1/2 months in order to prepare for a general-election campaign against a relatively popular incumbent.

Furthermore, no N.C. governor has lost a re-election bid since voters granted the state's top executives the right to serve successive terms in the late '70s.

(In 1984, then-Gov. Jim Hunt decided to run for the U.S. Senate against Jesse Helms and ultimately lost what has gone down as one of the most expensive Senate races in history.)

But given President Bush's high approval ratings in the state and a general Southern trend toward Republican insurgency, the race is far from a done deal — making Tuesday's primary an important step for Republicans who'd like to see Easley leave office.

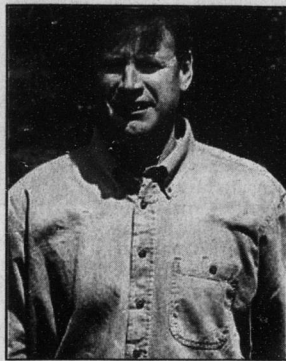
Contact the State & National Editor at stntdesk@unc.edu.

GUBERNATORIAL CANDIDATES



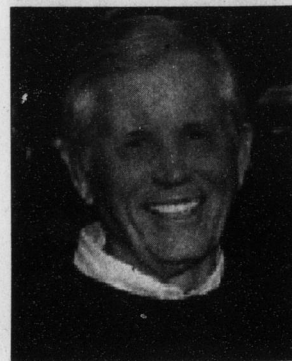
Patrick Ballantine (R)
AGE: 39
HOMETOWN: Wilmington
RESUME: Former N.C. Senate majority leader; attorney
KEY ISSUES: "Spending freeze" that would limit government spending to the rate of inflation; health insurance tax credits

www.ballantineforgovernor.com



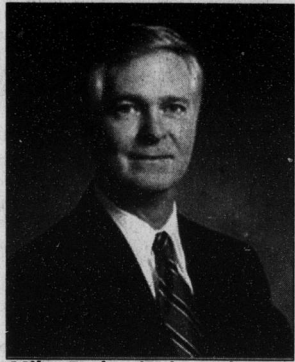
Dan Barrett (R)
AGE: 45
HOMETOWN: Laurinburg
JOB: Davie County Commissioner; attorney; civic leader
KEY ISSUES: Ten-point plan to create new jobs; reductions to gasoline tax; has walked across state in effort to reach out to voters

www.barrettforgovernor.com



Bill Cobey (R)
AGE: 65
HOMETOWN: Durham
JOB: Former U.S. congressman, UNC athletic director, N.C. GOP leader; consultant
KEY ISSUES: Opposes specific incentives for large businesses in favor of across-the-board tax cuts; detailed ethics plan for government

www.billcobey.org



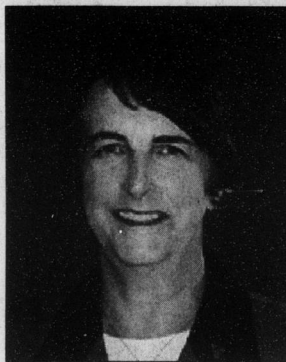
Mike Easley (D, incumbent)
AGE: 54
HOMETOWN: Rocky Mount
JOB: Governor; former N.C. attorney general; lawyer
KEY ISSUES: Limiting third-grade class sizes; "More at Four" preschool program; statewide lottery to fund education

www.mikeeasley.org



George Little (R)
AGE: 62
HOMETOWN: Southern Pines
JOB: Businessman; long-time Republican Party insider, fund-raiser
KEY ISSUES: More development, funding of community colleges; unlike many GOPers, supports advisory referendum on lottery

www.georgewlittle.com



Fern Shubert (R)
AGE: 56
HOMETOWN: Marshville
JOB: Former member of N.C. House; N.C. senator; accountant
KEY ISSUES: DMV reformation in order to protect state's borders; allocating money to preserve roads; deductible medical insurance

www.ferfern.com



Richard Vinroot (R)
AGE: 63
HOMETOWN: Charlotte
JOB: Former Charlotte mayor; two-time gubernatorial candidate; lawyer
KEY ISSUES: Return state budget surpluses to taxpayers; eliminate manufacturing tax; make government work with state businesses

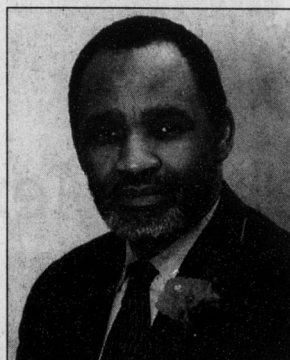
www.vinroot.com

COUNTY COMMISSIONER CANDIDATES



Margaret Brown (D)
YEARS LIVED IN ORANGE COUNTY: 34
JOB: retired; Orange County Commissioner
ENDORSEMENTS: Sierra Club
REASON FOR RUNNING: "I'm very interested in growth issues and their impact on the county and their impact on the environment and to continue preserving land."

www.reelectmargaretbrown.com



Moses Carey Jr. (D)
YEARS LIVED IN ORANGE COUNTY: 33
JOBS: Executive Director of Piedmont Health Services, Orange County Commissioner
ENDORSEMENTS: Hank Anderson Breakfast Club
REASON FOR RUNNING: "I've been a part of and started a number of projects that I want to see through to fruition."

www.mosescarey.com



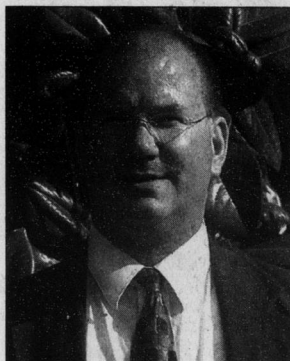
Jamie Daniel (R)
YEARS LIVED IN ORANGE COUNTY: 5
JOBS: CEO of Blade Technology, CEO of Tessen and Vice President of Razor
ENDORSEMENTS: none
REASON FOR RUNNING: "The county commissioners have fostered private agendas for quite a while. ... Everyone in this county needs to have a voice."

No Web site



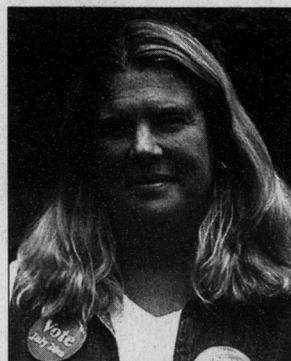
Valerie Foushee (D)
YEARS LIVED IN ORANGE COUNTY: 48
JOBS: Administrative Analyst for the Chapel Hill Police Department, member of Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Board of Education
ENDORSEMENTS: NoMerger.org, Hank Anderson Breakfast Club
REASON FOR RUNNING: "It's time for a change in Orange County leadership."

www.val4orange.com



Artie Franklin (L)
YEARS LIVED IN ORANGE COUNTY:
JOB: Technical writer for National Commerce Financial
ENDORSEMENTS: none
REASON FOR RUNNING: "The biggest inspiration was the school merger discussion last fall, that was the catalyst that made me consider it."

No Web site



Pam Hemminger (D)
YEARS LIVED IN ORANGE COUNTY: 17
JOB: community volunteer
ENDORSEMENTS: NoMerger.org, Sierra Club, Neighbors Gaining Knowledge, Orange County Soccer Alliance, Citizens for a Third High School
REASON FOR RUNNING: "I feel like the public input process has been broken."

www.pamhemminger.com

Local seat vital to needs of area

BY JOSEPH R. SCHWARTZ
CITY EDITOR

As the July 20 primary elections for the two open positions on the Orange County Board of Commissioners loom, candidates say they hope residents will realize the impact of the result.

Throughout the course of the campaign season, candidates and supporters have raised concerns that the public is not aware of the reach afforded to the commissioners.

"The commissioners touch the lives of every resident in this county much more than anyone else," said incumbent Moses Carey Jr. "We are responsible for land use planning and land use planning determines where there can be growth in the county."

The five-member board is charged with adopting an annual budget, contracting companies to provide services to the county and enacting land ordinances among other duties.

Through management of the almost \$130 million county budget, the board controls, to a large extent, education spending.

At the forefront of the issues this year is the impending merger of the Orange County Schools and the Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools.

David Weinberg, a member of NoMerger.org, a group formed to halt the move, said that July 20 is the last chance to do so.

"For as long as anyone can remember the winners of the Democratic primary have gone onto win the general election," he said. "It's a very important opportunity for local people to vote on merger by voting for one the candidates."

According to Carolyn Thomas, director of the Orange County Board of Elections, the Democrats' success can be attributed to the fact that there are 45,378 Democrats in the county as compared to 19,370 Republicans, 18,967 unaffiliated and 367 Libertarians.

But Thomas said only 19.4 percent of county residents voted in the 2002 primary.

Candidates Artie Franklin and Jamie Daniel automatically move onto the November election as the only members running from the Libertarian and Republican parties, respectively. Both said the past success of the Democratic primary winners isn't intimidating. Daniel questioned the logic of voting based on party affiliation.

"(My Republican affiliation is) my national politics but that's for (Washington, D.C.) and Raleigh," he said. "This is about our community and actually having progress."

Hemminger said that she just wants people to take a more active role in county politics, no matter what party affiliation might be.

"The county is growing and changing. I think it's important to get more public input in what's going on."

Contact the City Editor at citydesk@unc.edu.

SOURCES: CANDIDATE WEBSITES AND CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS