

Ballantine seeks to pull off upset

BY KAVITA PILLAI
ASSISTANT STATE & NATIONAL EDITOR

After running a heated primary campaign and avoiding a runoff election, former N.C. Sen. Patrick Ballantine, the Republican candidate for governor, can focus his energy and depleted funds on the task at hand.

Ballantine, who resigned his post as Senate minority leader in April, beat out four other contenders in the Republican primary for the chance to face off against veteran candidate Richard Vinroot in a runoff election.

But Ballantine's campaign received a welcomed boost when Vinroot dropped out of the runoff race, citing a need for unity within the state GOP.

"Obviously, it was very beneficial to not have a runoff," said Charles Cote, spokesman for the Ballantine campaign. "It allowed Patrick to turn his attention."

But Ballantine only has 10 weeks left to edge out Democratic incumbent Gov. Mike Easley. And it will be no easy feat: The last time North Carolinians elected a Republican governor was in the 1970s.

"Ballantine scored an impressive victory by winning the Republican

nomination," said Ferrel Guillory, director of UNC's Program on Southern Politics, Media and Public Life. "But he remains an underdog."

Bill Peaslee, chief of staff for the N.C. Republican Party, said the lack of a runoff will give the GOP a chance to forget the in-fighting of the primary season.

"It allows time for any wounds that may have happened during the primary to heal," he said.

Ballantine just wrapped up a 60-stop tour of eastern North Carolina last week and will spend the next few weeks stumping in towns across the state.

Cote said Ballantine's fresh face to politics helped him win the primary and will do the same in November.

"Patrick focuses on a new generation of Republican leadership," Cote said. "He will appeal to a lot of those conservative Democrats."

But Ballantine has to address the problem of name recognition, Peaslee said.

"He hasn't held statewide office before," he said. "One of the things he has to overcome is getting his name out there, who he is and what he stands for."

Guillory said that without any



Former N.C. Sen. Patrick Ballantine is the GOP candidate for governor after running a heated primary campaign and avoiding a runoff election.

scandals erupting during Easley's term, Ballantine likely will debate Easley on the issues, including the tax increases Easley implemented early in his term.

"I don't doubt they will fight to some extent over taxes," Guillory said. "But even some Republicans voted to sustain some revenue-raising."

Ballantine wants to cut taxes to create jobs, Cote said. He is also

planning an initiative to have students reading by the end of second grade.

This could be a response to Easley's K-12 support that originated in his 2000 campaign.

But Ballantine spent a lot of money on the primary, while Easley still has full coffers.

"(Ballantine) must replenish his funds, and quickly," Guillory said.

He said Ballantine likely will get financial help from national party figures and the Republican Governors Association.

"There is a lot of two-party competition in the South over governorships," Guillory said. "Both national parties will be interested."

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

Tight race highlights Easley's ties to Kerry

BY ALEXANDRA DODSON
STAFF WRITER

With 15 electoral votes and a conservative reputation, North Carolina usually does not receive much attention from Democratic presidential campaigns.

But things have changed in this election, as Democratic presidential nominee John Kerry and vice presidential nominee John Edwards, a North Carolinian, have made multiple appearances in the state.

One prominent N.C. Democrat, however, has not made a point to join Kerry and Edwards on the campaign trail.

Gov. Mike Easley did not attend the Democratic National Convention in Boston last month or a rally for Kerry and Edwards in Raleigh on July 29. Last weekend, he did not greet Kerry in Charlotte, where the candidate was visiting.

Easley told journalists he missed the Raleigh rally due to a pre-scheduled family event and was unable to go to Charlotte because of a meeting of the N.C. Association of County Commissioners held in Asheville.

But John Hood, president of the John Locke Foundation, a Raleigh-based conservative think tank, said there might be another reason for Easley's absence at these events.

"I think Easley's folks know that a picture with Kerry is nothing but bad," he said.

Hood said Republican gubernatorial candidate Patrick Ballantine, easily could use any ties between Easley and Kerry to sway voters.

He added that many North Carolinians perceive Kerry as a "left-winger" who is not likely to get much support in the state and that Easley likely is avoiding associations with him.

But Schorr Johnson, communications director for the N.C. Democratic Party, disagreed.

"People are reading way too much into this," he said. "The governor is a busy man."

Johnson said he expects Easley and Kerry to make joint appearances as the Nov. 2 election nears.

Ferrel Guillory, director of UNC's Program on Southern Politics, Media and Public Life, said any distance between Easley and the Kerry-Edwards ticket is probably due to an agreement to run their campaigns independently.

Guillory said the economy is an issue that could cause a split between state and national campaigns.

"It's in Easley's interest to depict the economy as doing better. It's in the national party's interest to depict the economy as not doing very well."

"Both parties are caught in this crosscurrent," he said. "(But) Ballantine needs Bush's coattails more than Easley needs Kerry's."

For now, Guillory said, issues like the economy will keep Easley separate from Kerry and Edwards. "It's hard for them to make joint appearances saying different things."

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

Schools to receive Spanish teachers

BY RYAN C. TUCK
CITY EDITOR

The growing Spanish-speaking community has highlighted the need for elementary school Spanish programs to start developing language skills in students at a younger age.

In response, the Orange County Board of Education is ensuring there will be a Spanish teacher at every elementary school this year.

As included in Superintendent Shirley Carraway's 2004-05 recommended budget, the school board approved the hiring of six new Spanish teachers at its Aug. 16 meeting.

Grady A. Brown Elementary School is now the only elementary school that has a Spanish program in place.

"The best time to learn a foreign language is when you are young," said Anne D'Annunzio, spokeswoman for Orange County Schools. "There's been a lot of parents ask-

ing for (more Spanish classes)."

D'Annunzio said the Grady Brown program has been very successful because of a growing demand for students who speak Spanish.

El Centro Latino, a nonprofit organization in Carrboro that exists to assist members of the Latino community, reports that more than 4.5 percent of Orange County's population is now of Hispanic or Latino origin.

Carrboro's population, one of the state's fastest growing Latino communities, is around 13 percent.

Hector Perez, executive director of El Centro Latino, said he is pleased with the hiring of more Spanish teachers.

"This is an exciting development," he said. "It's a great direction for the school system."

D'Annunzio said Carraway's bigger goal is to prepare students for advanced Spanish programs in the high schools. "This will be an academic program," she said.

"They'll be ahead of the game."

Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools now offers Spanish classes in five of its nine elementary schools. The other four schools offer French.

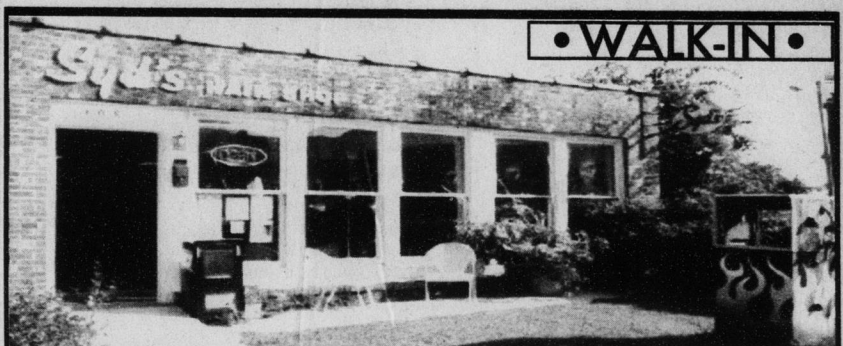
Robin Nucelli, a publications assistant for CHCCS, said the school system has decided to go on a "case by case" basis as far as what language each school will offer.

The hiring of two additional social workers, on top of the four Orange County Schools already employ, also was approved in the superintendent's budget.

School board members also decided that one full-time substitute per district school was enough, effective Oct. 1.

Finding the new Spanish teachers is the next step, D'Annunzio said. "As soon as we find them, we'll get started," she said.

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