Legislative, Congressional Qualifying Begins Monday

By: Jim Turner | Posted: June 4, 2012 3:55 AM

Despite voter-approved changes to the way Florida’s legislative and congressional districts were redrawn, the makeup isn’t showing much of a shake-up as the election cycle formally kicks into gear next week.

The official qualifying period for the 2012 legislative races runs from noon Monday to noon on Friday, June 8, but the gates have already been filling up.

An early offshoot of the makeup of the candidates is that the 2016 Senate president aspiration of Sen. Jack Latvala, R-St. Petersburg, may be a little shaky.

Sen. Jim Norman, R-Tampa, is facing competition from Rep. John Legg, R-Port Richey. Legg has quickly gotten backing from House Speaker Dean Cannon and Sen. Mike Fasano, R-New Port Richey.

Another expected stalwart for Latvala, Sen. Ronda Storms, R-Valrico, has decided to run for Hillsborough County Property Appraiser instead of re-election.

Former Senate president Tom Lee is among the crowd that has jumped for Storms’ seat, which could make him a key player as Latvala and Sen. John Thrasher, R-St. Augustine, eye the Senate gavel in 2016.

Otherwise, Republicans are expected to maintain their hold on both chambers of the Legislature and among the congressional delegation, even as two additional seats have been added due to the state’s increased population, and with the voter-approved Fair Districts amendments.

“The amendments didn’t have the big impact some were hoping for and it appears that gerrymandering is alive and well,” said Kevin Wagner, Florida Atlantic University assistant professor of political science.
Voter-approved term limits also aren’t discouraging former legislators from seeking office.

In one Treasure Coast district, House 84, voters may get to decide between two former representatives: Adam Fetterman, a Democrat from Port St. Lucie, and Art Argenio, Republican and tea party member from Fort Pierce who is running without a party affiliation.

The state allows a candidate who served eight years to sit out a term before running for the same office, or one can run for a seat in the other chamber.

Other former legislators seeking a return to Tallahassee:

**House:**

- Art Argenio, Fort Pierce, Republican.
- Nancy Argenziano, Homosassa, Independent.
- Gus Barreiro, Miami, Republican.
- Bob Brooks, Orlando, Republican.
- Carl Domino, Jupiter, Republican.
- Mike Fasano, New Port Richey, Republican.
- Adam Fetterman, Port St. Lucie, Democrat.
- Renier Diaz de la Portilla, Miami, Republican.
- Michael Grant, Bonita Springs, Republican.
- Randy Johnson, Sebring, Republican.
- Jamey Westbrook, Port St. Joe, Republican.

**Senate:**

- Aaron Bean, Fernandina Beach, Republican.
- James Bush III, Miami, Democrat.
- Alex Diaz de la Portilla, Miami, Republican.
- Bill Galvano, Bradenton, Republican.
Tom Lee, Brandon, Republican.

Rob Wallace, Tampa, Republican.

The list does not include House members seeking Senate seats.

The qualifying period runs from noon, June 4 to noon, June 8.

Candidates who do not qualify by petition must pay a qualifying fee, drawn upon the candidate’s campaign account, by noon on June 8 at the Division of Elections, R.A. Gray Building, Room 316, 500 South Bronough St., Tallahassee.

Cost for congressional candidates is $6,960 without a party, $10,440 with a party.

Cost of legislative candidates is $1,187.88 without a party, $1,781.82 with a party.