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Myerscough takes herself out of 18th District race

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Fourth District Appellate Justice Sue Myerscough has decided not to run for Congress and instead plans to seek another decade on the bench.

By Bernard Schoenburg

Fourth District Appellate Justice Sue Myerscough has decided not to run for Congress and instead plans to seek another decade on the bench.

"I'm running for retention," Myerscough, a Springfield Democrat, said Tuesday. "My heart's in being a judge."

Myerscough said she received "quite a bit of encouragement" to run for Congress in Illinois' 18th District, where U.S. Rep. Ray LaHood, R-Peoria, is not seeking another term. She said she was "very honored to be considered," but decided that being a judge is a better fit.

"People elected me to do this," she said. "This is what I enjoy doing. I take this position very seriously. I hope to continue in this position."

Myerscough was among potential Democratic candidates in the 18th who met earlier this month with a representative of the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee from Washington, D.C.



Myerscough said after that meeting with Jenn Pihlaja, Midwest regional political director of the DCCC, that the race for a Democrat from Springfield looked "much better than I thought." The district's main population base is in Peoria, and the 18th has been represented by Republicans for decades.

Others who met with Pihlaja include former state Rep. Bill Edley, now a Department of Corrections official, and Circuit Judge Richard Grawey of Dunlap.

Grawey announced Monday that he is stepping down from his post as chief judge of the 10th Judicial Circuit, which includes Peoria. That would give him a transition period if he ultimately decides to run for the 18th District seat, Grawey said.

Another Democrat who is considering a run is Dick Versace, former Bradley University and NBA basketball coach. Peoria attorney Patricia Benassi, however, has decided not to seek the Democratic nomination.

Grawey said he thinks a Democrat can definitely win the district, even though it is "not an even playing field." He estimated the 18th District probably includes 25,000 more hard-core Republicans than hard-core Democrats, but a Democrat who gets 62 percent of swing voters can win.

Edley also said winning in the district would be an uphill battle.

Democratic U.S. Sen. John Kerry carried Peoria County by 70 votes over GOP President George Bush in 2004, "and then lost the other 19 counties (in the 18th) by 51,000," Edley said.

"How do you come up with 26,000 votes to win it in the other 19 counties? ... I haven't resolved that question."

The Republican field includes state Rep. Aaron Schock of Peoria and former Peoria City Council member John Morris. Attorney Darin LaHood, son of the incumbent, has said he is seriously considering a run, and Peoria businessman Jim McConoughey also has set up an exploratory committee.

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