

Probst to Challenge Dunn

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By KATHIE DURBIN, Columbian staff writer

Tim Probst, chief executive officer of the Washington Workforce Association and a Democratic Party activist, is running to unseat Rep. Jim Dunn in the 17th Legislative District this November.

Probst has raised \$21,000 and has garnered endorsements from all of Clark County's Democratic legislators, including Rep. Deb Wallace, D-Vancouver, who holds the other 17th District House seat.

He's also endorsed by Clark County Commissioner Steve Stuart; by Jack Burkman, who ran for the Democratic nomination to challenge Dunn in 2006; and by Pat Campbell, who defeated Burkman in a Democratic upset but went on to lose to Dunn in a squeaker in the general election. Campbell won a seat on the Vancouver City Council last fall.

Probst has a long résumé that includes a stint as a state policy analyst in Illinois and nine years as director of the Washington Workforce Association, which advocates for programs that invest in the education and training of the state's work force to compete in the global economy.

He said he's running because he's convinced Dunn does not represent the interests of the 17th.

"When Jim was at the recent legislative forum at the Hilton, he said his peers are pretty far right but not far right enough for him," Probst said Wednesday. "I don't think that matches our district anymore. I take a more bipartisan approach. I think people in the district have much more that unites them than divides them. Some of that

division is manufactured, and it's time to stop doing that.

Residents of the 17th care about creating middle-class jobs, preventing high school dropouts and funding transportation improvements, he said.

"When I look at Jim's record, he voted against every transportation improvement in this district," Probst said. "Deb Wallace got those improvements made over his objections, and I think she needs a partner."

Dunn also voted against a college affordability bill and a dropout prevention bill that had broad legislative support, Probst said.

His contributions include \$4,200 from David and Patricia Nierenberg and the Nierenberg Investment Management Co.

Dunn unsure if he'll run

Dunn said in an interview this week that he has not decided whether to seek re-election. If he does decide to run, he will have a Republican primary challenger, Joseph James, who owns a dog-boarding business. James has been endorsed by several county Republican leaders, including County Commissioner Marc Boldt.

Probst filed for the 17th District seat last October and has been raising money quietly since then without making a formal announcement.

Last year, he helped push Clark County's 17th District Democratic Committee to pass a resolution calling on Gov. Chris Gregoire and the Democratic leadership of the House and Senate to pass comprehensive "clean elections" legislation, including public funding of local campaigns.

A bill to allow a voluntary, experimental program of public funding for statewide judicial races failed to pass the 2007 Legislature. A broader bill allowing voluntary public funding of local elections appears dead for the 2008 session.

Probst is a member of the Clark County Skills Center Foundation, the Labor Roundtable, the Greater Vancouver Chamber of Commerce -Public Affairs Committee, and the state's oversight board for dropout prevention programs.

He holds a degree in government and international relations from the University of Notre Dame and worked as a state budget analyst, legislative liaison and assistant to Illinois Gov. Jim Edgar from 1994 to 1998.

A resident of Vancouver since 1998, he is married to Tahira Probst, a professor of psychology at Washington State University Vancouver. They have four children.