

Politics

Education dominates state rep race

By SARAH CLOOTS
Contributing Writer

Democratic nominee Charlotte Coffelt and Republican nominee Joe Crabb, the incumbent, will go head-to-head on November 2 in hopes of securing District 127's position in the Texas House of Representatives.

Coffelt is a retired Humble ISD teacher and principal, and a former elected member of Spring ISD's board of trustees.

She received her bachelors degree in elementary education from Oklahoma State University, her masters in education administration from Sam Houston State University, and attended principals' academies at both Texas A&M and Harvard.

The Kingwood resident has

lived in Texas for 40 years, 35 of those years in Harris County. She describes herself as having long been interested in public policy,



Coffelt

and is "extremely concerned about how and why the Texas State Legislature has neglected to adequately fund our public schools over the past decade."

She received FamilyTime's 2003 "Woman of Achievement as Community Activist" award, the 1998 Achievement Award from the Mu Pi Chapter of Delta Kappa Gamma Society International, and an Honorary

Life Membership in the Texas Congress of Parents and Teachers in 1992.

Crabb graduated from Crosby High School, and later served in the Navy's JAG Corps, as a district attorney for Harris County, and as a prosecutor for the cities of Houston and Humble.

He has served six terms in the Texas House of Representatives, and has a private law practice.

An ordained Methodist minister, Crabb received a bachelor of arts and JD from The University of Texas, a masters in theology from the University of St. Thomas, and a doctorate in ministry from Texas Christian University.

He is a member of the Regulated Industries Committee and the Energy Resources

Committee, and chairman of the Redistricting Committee.

The former Scoutmaster is also a pastor at Addicks Community

Methodist Church, and currently serves on the advisory board of directors of the Sam Houston Area Council of the Boy Scouts of America. He's also a member of the North Harris County Criminal Justice Association.

Education policy is one of the hottest issues of this campaign, and both Coffelt and Crabb have



Crabb

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personal ties to aspects of Texas' education system.

Currently the state's share of public school funding is 40 percent, when it was contributing 60 percent only a few years ago.

Crabb has criticized this very vocally, and says that despite "the fact that the financial responsibility firmly falls within the constitutional obliga-

tion of the state of Texas, a decreasing amount of support has required local public school districts to make up a much larger difference in order to operate our neighborhood schools."

Among her top priorities are increasing the state's support for the funding of education and other services, while simultaneously easing the burden on citizens by decreasing local property taxes.

Crabb, whose wife teaches at Bear Branch Elementary, has

been endorsed by the Texas Homeschool Coalition. Although not a member of the Texas House of Representatives' Education Committee, among his voting record are various education-related bills which he authored or co-authored, among them a bill dealing with career and technology curriculum in schools and a bill recommending that personal finance knowledge and skills be incorporated in public school curriculum.

It should be noted that, on

September 15, State District Judge John Dietz ruled that, in a violation of the Texas Constitution, the state does not currently contribute its fair share toward public school funding.

In response to his mandate to fix this, Lieutenant Governor David Dewhurst and House Speaker Tom Craddick proposed a new, ostensibly loophole-free business tax which could contribute more than 50 percent of the necessary educa-

tion budget. An increase in the cigarette tax would also contribute to the pool, which proponents say would add up to an education funding increase of some \$4 billion a year.

Further exploration of the candidates and their platforms can be done at their Web sites.

On Coffelt's Web site, www.coffeltforstaterep.com, she notably criticizes Governor Rick Perry's major Children's Health Insurance Program cutbacks, and cites access to

affordable health care as something all Texans, especially children, deserve.

Crabb's Web site is his House of Representatives home page, www.house.state.tx.us/members/dist127/crabb.htm, where visitors can read the text of all the bills he's authored, co-authored, sponsored, and co-sponsored, as well as being linked to his complete voting record in the 78th legislature and all sessions of his six terms in office.