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## Why District 44 matters: Williams, Hardy in runoff

### Candidates say they can work with delegation

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Both men in the race for the House of Representatives District 44 seat Nov. 17 are Democrats, each with more than a decade of public service.

Either Lafayette City-Parish Councilman Chris Williams or Lafayette Parish School Board member Rickey Hardy will join the Acadiana delegation of the Louisiana Legislature in January.

That Legislature will work with a newly elected Republican governor and a Democrat-dominated Senate in deciding what to do with a \$1 billion state surplus that could exceed \$2 billion if the price of oil continues to rise, Jim Brandt, president of the Public Affairs Research Council of Louisiana, said.

"That's one of the important early issues the Legislature has to grapple with," Brandt said.

### It matters

It may be only a single seat out of 105 in the state House of Representatives, but it matters who is chosen to represent House District 44, state Sen. Donald Cravins Jr., D-Opelousas said.

"The north side of Lafayette is primed for growth," Cravins said. "The person who is going to represent that part of the parish for the next four years and possibly the next 12 years should have a major impact on growth in that area."

State Rep. Wilfred Pierre, D-Lafayette, has represented the district since 1991. He vacates the post in January, unable to run again because of term limits.

The man elected to replace Pierre will serve four years, but could seek re-election twice as the incumbent, stretching his tenure into 12 years.

With at least 50 new representatives in the House, the person elected to represent District 44 "should be able to hit the ground running" without spending his first year learning the ropes, Cravins said.

### Bipartisanship important

It also will be important for the District 44 representatives to work well with the Acadiana delegation to secure funding for projects important to everyone, regardless of race, party or district, state Sen. Mike Michot, R-Lafayette, said.

Issues important to Acadiana, such as roadways, know no parish, city or district boundaries or parties, Michot said.

"I think the strength of the Acadiana delegation is that we're a bipartisan group," Michot said.

The delegation includes Republicans Michot and state Rep. Don Trahan, Democratic state Sen. Nick Gautreaux and outgoing state Rep. Wilfred Pierre, and Independent state Rep. Joel Robideaux.

Whoever wins the District 44 race on Nov. 17 will be moving to a statehouse led by a Republican governor, a Democratic Senate and a House whose leading party will be decided on Nov. 17.

About 17 House races involving a Democrat and a Republican will be decided Nov. 17, Brandt said.

The ability to work with bipartisan legislators outside the Acadiana delegation also will be important.

"(Gov.-elect Bobby) Jindal's strategy has been very clear that he wants to govern in a nonpartisan fashion," Brandt said.

Both Hardy and Williams said they can and will work with Jindal and with Republican legislators and senators to move Louisiana forward.

The first key is for everyone to agree on the problems, Williams said. While Democrats and Republicans may approach solving those problems in different ways, leaders in the Legislature and Jindal himself must not let the houses mire down in partisan politics, he said.

Hardy agreed that leaders of all parties must work together for the common good, not what's best for themselves.

"Party affiliation will not have any effect on me," Hardy said. "We must deal with the issues that are plaguing this state. We have to be bigger than that. We have to introduce legislation that's going to ... enhance the entire state of Louisiana."