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## Potomac Fever: Two women challenge House incumbents

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Now that the congressional primaries are past, let's take a walk through the campaign finance reports for the two House races in Iowa that could indeed bring about change - the first woman elected to Congress from the state.

It's interesting that the two men being challenged, Rep. Tom Latham, an Ames Republican, and Rep. Dave Loebsack, a Mount Vernon Democrat, also have the highest cash-on-hand totals in the Iowa delegation right now. If any of the House races in Iowa draw deeper national attention, it might be these two.

Among all Iowa incumbents or challengers, Latham won, hands down, for biggest campaign treasury as of June 30, with \$832,000 in the till.

Clearly Latham is taking this year's race very seriously after winning with 57 percent of the vote in 2006, his second-lowest percentage ever.

About 65 percent of the \$159,000 Latham raised between May 15 and June 30 came from PACs. Sen. Charles Grassley to date has sent more than \$5,000 from his Hawkeye PAC. Other contributions are flowing from health, business and farm PACs, and from other congressional Republicans. Latham has passed \$1 million in total fundraising this cycle, of which 51 percent has come from PACs.

Latham's challenger is Democrat Becky Greenwald of Perry, who fought off three other eager Democrats in the June primary.

She received \$2,500 from Sen. Tom Harkin's TOMPAC, so the senators are invested on both sides. Greenwald also received \$4,250 from the defunct campaign of ex-candidate Selden Spencer and \$1,000 from a PAC run by Rep. Bruce Braley.

County Democratic committees chipped in \$16,750, and Greenwald ended the period with about \$82,000 in the bank. She has a ways to go, but it could get interesting - the district stretching from Warren to Allamakee counties now has nearly 8,000 more Democrats than Republicans registered.

The other woman running for Congress is Republican Mariannette Miller-Meeks, an Ottumwa ophthalmologist. She's challenging Loebsack in the congressional district arguably hardest-hit by the floods this year.

Miller-Meeks, who has an ambulance as a campaign prop, is tapping into a network of physicians for contributions, mostly in Iowa so far, but she will need more with just \$5,200 cash on hand.

Her report shows she paid for advertising, direct mail and consulting done by Eagle Media in Des Moines, for a total of \$71,000, during the primary, accounting for almost all of the \$87,000 she spent as she defeated Peter Teahen.

Unlike Greenwald, though, voter registration numbers are not in Miller-Meeks' favor, with 57,000 more Democrats than Republicans now registered in the 2nd District.

Loebsack, in his first re-election campaign, is armed with \$469,000 in the bank as of June 30. To date during the election cycle, he's raised \$754,000, of which 65 percent came from PACs. It's kind of an astonishing sum given the low-budget nature of the 2006 race in which he upset Rep. Jim Leach by spending about \$435,000 in total.

Of the \$80,000 Loebsack raised between May 15 and June 30, 74 percent came from business PACs

such as the American Bankers Association, Archer Daniels Midland Co., Qwest Communications, Purdue Pharma and Union Pacific Co., many labor union and health-oriented PACs, and \$2,500 from Harkin's PAC.

Greenwald and Miller-Meeks are the latest in a line of Iowa women who tried to upset incumbent congressmen - Joyce Schulte, Julie Thomas, Ann Hutchinson, Elaine Baxter, Jean Lloyd-Jones, Connie McBurney, Lynn Cutler. None has succeeded.

To drag out the depressing statistic once again, Iowa is among four states that have never sent a woman to Congress, along with Delaware, Mississippi and Vermont, according to the Center for American Women and Politics at Rutgers University. Currently there are 72 women serving in the House and 16 in the Senate.

Whether Iowa sends a woman to join them this year will depend on election-year trends that haven't yet fully developed, but it looks like Latham and Loeb sack are taking nothing for granted. Bring on the fundraisers.

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