

## **MORRELL A BIG FACTOR IN U.S. SENATE RACE**

State Rep. Arthur Morrell was initially considered by most political observers as just another name trying to get a little attention in the fall U.S. Senate race. John Breaux's open Louisiana spot was shaping up as a three man race. Last week, the possibility of a David Duke candidacy caused concern in the camp of Congressman David Vitter (R). This week, Morrell has the two leading Democrats looking over their shoulder.

Democrats around the state gathered last Saturday at the Sheraton Hotel in downtown Baton Rouge to elect delegates to the Democratic National Convention taking place in Boston next month. A host of candidates were on hand to "meet and greet" members of the Democratic Central Committee. Charmaine Caccioppi and Charlie Melancon were both there from beginning to end working the crowd continually in quest for Third Congressional District votes.

Both Treasurer John Kennedy and Congressman Chris John did well with the crowd in talking up traditional democratic issues. But it was Morrell who brought the debate back to what's best for Louisiana. "We're spending 20 million dollars right now in Iraq for wetlands restoration, but doing very little here at home. New roads are going up all over Iraq, yet Louisiana's roads are falling apart. This makes no sense," Morrell told the crowd.

His rhetoric obviously made sense to those in attendance. As we were visiting after his speech, a number of delegates came over to tell him how impressed they were with his comments. His message is one of the state being shortchanged for years.

He will be the only candidate with military experience (Army Special Forces during Viet Nam) and he's been in the legislature since 1983. The bottom line for Morrell will be money -- getting his message across. But he seems committed to the race, and should garner a large African-American vote. He may not make the runoff, but he could be an important factor in shaping the debate from a referendum on national issues to focusing on what should have been done, and needs to be done, here in Louisiana.

Hotshot Washington P.R. guys telling candidates what to say from a national perspective is not what this state needs to hear. Morrell will be providing a real service, win or lose, by keeping the debate localized. He's definitely a factor in this race, and how both Kennedy and John handle the issues Morrell has captured so far, and their respective relationships with Morrell himself, could well determine who gets a runoff spot come November.

## **A COMEBACK FOR SAMMY NUNEZ?**

Former State Senate President Sammy Nunez, from St. Bernard Parish is thinking seriously of adding the title "Congressman" to his name. A recent Vern Kennedy poll

has him running well in the Third Congressional District. Kennedy's numbers put newcomer Billy Tauzin, son of the present congressman, ahead with 42% of the vote. Most observers think voters have father and son confused, and these numbers will drop in the weeks to come. Nunez runs second with 20%. The other candidates all are in single figures for now.

Nunez figures he is all alone in the eastern half of the district that curls like a snake. From St. Bernard, through Plaquemines, part of Jefferson (all in Nunez's old senatorial district), then from LaFourche all the way up to Lafayette. With the other announced candidates living in the west, Nunez feels he is in good shape to make the runoff. He's a little older now, but still feels he's able to go to the post again. He's on the phone with old friends and evaluating the cost of the race. Look for him to make a final decision by July 1st.

### **FLETCHER HEAVILY COURTED IN THE FIFTH**

Lee Fletcher ran a heck of a race for 5<sup>th</sup> District congressman in 2002, barely losing out to present incumbent Rodney Alexander. He was no doubt hurt by national Republican Party officials influencing his campaign in the final weeks. He runs a successful public relations firm, and opted some time back to pass on a second shot. Conventional political wisdom was that former Congressman John Cooksey would be the Republican choice. But Dr. John is doing to well in the botox business and has now decided to pass, so national party officials are making one final run at Fletcher.

He is articulate in a "down home" way, and fits in well with the conservative flow of politics throughout northeast Louisiana. And he hosts a popular daily talk radio show in Monroe that has kept him in the limelight. It's a tough choice. He certainly wants to go to Washington, and apparently the financial assurances from the Republican congressional campaign committee are strong.

But Lee is young, has time to put a little money aside and consider a future race. He's one of the brighter young Republican operatives in the state. There will be other opportunities for Lee in the future.

### **FEDERAL COURTS CONTINUE TO RUN LOUISIANA**

For years, major departments of state government have been dictated to by federal courts. The state prison system was at the mercy of a federal judge for most of the last half century. The East Baton Rouge school system has been dictated to by a federal judge for the past 40 years. Today, if election officials want to move a voting precinct 20 feet, approval has to be obtained from the justice department. South of I-10, it's almost necessary to get permission from the Corps of Engineers to dig a hole in the ground.

Last week, the Orleans Parish School Board called a special meeting to consider firing the Superintendent. He's apparently a pretty competent fellow, and the board was probably going to make a mistake in taking such action. But they are elected, and if voters there don't agree with the Board's decision, they can boot the members out of office come election time. That's how the system, good or bad, was designed to work.

Now a federal judge has stepped in and enjoined the board from taking any action. What's the federal issue here? Why are the federal courts involved? It makes about as much sense as the feds interfering in a two bit insurance case where there were no federal issues and no crime of any kind was committed.

The school board attorney did not mince any words. The federal court's action, she said, was "The most retarded, idiotic, dangerous, repugnant, action. It goes against the whole notion of the rule of law. It does violence to all our rights when the courts enjoin the actions of elected bodies, whether they are good or bad."

Right on! Give the system a chance to work. Voters can act. The legislature can act. The governor can act. And the state courts can review all that's happened. Federal courts should be a venue of last resort when and only when there is a federal issue involved. There is certainly nothing close to this here.

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### **British Ale and James Gill**

James Gill is the witty, sarcastic and irreverent columnist for the New Orleans Times Picayune who offers twice weekly observations with a political slant. And he popped me pretty good this past Sunday. He didn't like one of the comments made in my weekly column of last Thursday (June 3<sup>rd</sup>).

Now, as usual, my column covered a number of issues. Brother Gill wasn't bothered with the atrocities of the U.S. prison system, the President's problems in Iraq or my comments about Martha Stewart. No, it was British ale that got his goat. Gill, a Brit himself, was incensed that I used the phrase "mind your p's and q's," and I attributed this slang to the pub barkeep cajoling to "mind your pints and quarts." In other words, don't drink too much and get rowdy.

The comment got James's neck bowed up. He asserted in his Sunday column:

*Someone had a field day with Brown, although not apparently in a pub, where, his Web site reveals, he believes that ale is still sold by the quart. Beer has always come by the pint in English hostelryes for as long as even such a fairly old guy as Brown has been available to quaff it."*

**So there.**

How can you refute that? Right from the Picayune and the Brit's mouth himself. Except.....he's wrong. Now I want to be gentle with this. After all, James Gill has written time and time again how "Jim Brown got a raw deal in his federal trial." So to be above board and fair, I went to the best **BRITISH SOURCE** I could find. And there it was. Printed clearly in *Roget's Thesaurus which is part of the Oxford University Press, a **BRITISH** publication.* Let me quote from their view of this really important issue.

*"There are various proposed explanations of this. Amongst the most plausible are the notion that ale used to be ordered in either pints or quarts and you needed to be careful which you were given."*

So there again. Next time I see James Gill, I'm going to offer to buy him a "quart" of ale, and let him chose from such brands as Ballantine, Beverwyck, Boston Light, Boston Stock, Brockert, Brucks, Clyde, Cooper's Yorktown, Cremo, Croft, Dawsons and numerous other beers that are sold in Britain and the world over, all in quarts as well as pints.

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And finally, to our congressional and senate wannabes, a request that you do not fall for the Washington mindset that seems to ooze out of the nation's capital. The reverse rhetoric where one thing is said or voted on in congress, but the opposite tack is taken back home. How about:

The United States should get out of the United Nations, but a high national priority is enforcing U. N. resolutions against Iraq.

The best way to improve military morale is to praise the troops in speeches while slashing veterans' benefits and combat pay.

A good way to fight terrorism is to belittle our long-time allies, then demand their cooperation and money.

Providing health care to all Iraqis is sound policy. Providing health care to all Americans is socialism.

Trade with Cuba is wrong because the country is communist, but trade with China and Vietnam is vital to a spirit of international harmony.

“Standing tall for America” means firing your workers and moving their jobs to India.

Being a drug addict is a moral failing and a crime, unless you are a popular radio host. Then it’s an illness and you need our prayers for your recovery.

So stay consistent when you go to Washington, represent a Louisiana perspective, and, oh yes: Be sure to mind you Ps and Qs.

Peace and Justice.

Jim Brown