

# THE KENTUCKY ENQUIRER

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## BLUEGRASS POLITICS

# Groob vs. Westwood, again: Not the same old landscape

For someone like me, with the attention span of an 8-year-old boy on Red Bull, politics is great because it constantly changes.

The political landscape isn't what it was six weeks ago (Steve Beshear had just begun serving as governor), six months ago (Ernie Fletcher was still governor) or six years ago (people actually liked George W. Bush).

So even though Republican Sen. Jack Westwood and Democrat Kathy Groob are set to reprise their 2004 statehouse battle, much has changed in the last four years.

That's what the Democrats are counting on as they try to wrestle away a GOP seat that Groob lost by six points in Kenton County's last 23rd Senate District election.

Four years ago, Westwood — who is in his third term — and the Republicans did have some momentum and coattails on their side.

Bush, Sen. Jim Bunning and Congressman Geoff Davis were all re-elected. Bush and Bunning carried Kenton County with 65 percent of the vote; Davis had 56 percent.

Davis is back on the ballot but so far has not drawn an opponent with name recognition like his '04 foe, television personality and



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writer Nick Clooney, so interest in his race will be down.

Bunning isn't on the ticket, but Sen. Mitch McConnell is. McConnell, the Senate GOP leader, will attract lots of criticism, but it would be a mistake to think he won't be massively funded and strongly organized.

Fletcher hadn't been indicted in 2004 and he was still on a bit of a honeymoon and the GOP held Congress. Those factors probably helped Westwood.

This year the Democrats have Congress, though that is hardly an advantage these days. And if the Democrats think Hillary Clinton or Barack Obama are going to excite Kenton County voters, think again. The GOP, however, will struggle to hold the White House.

The GOP also had a huge chip to play in 2004: the statewide Constitutional amendment banning gay marriage in Kentucky. The amendment won almost two-to-one in Kenton County and was credited with helping to bring Republicans and conservative Demo-

crats to the polls.

This year's amendment could be on casino gambling. Westwood is not a fan, but Groob is and the voters like the idea, according to some statewide polling. So that plays in Groob's favor.

As far as the candidates, Groob at least now has the experience of running in a campaign. But she'll have to toughen up; last time, her skin was as thin as the Morning-view phone book.

Westwood talks a good game about accomplishments, but he'll have to prove it.

Groob is going to come at him hard about being ineffective during his 12 years in Frankfort.

If you didn't enjoy it last time, sit back and watch what should be one of the better statehouse races in Kentucky this year.

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