

Democratic Congressional Races Shape Up On Last Day Of Filing

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By Rick Pearson

The window for filing petitions to run for Congress in Illinois' new districts closed Tuesday with Democrats looking to take advantage of the map they drew to try to boost their numbers in Washington.

But the opportunity doesn't come without some risk. Several high-profile bruising Democratic primary contests are looming. That could create weakened nominees to challenge Republicans in November, even though the contours of the new map lines are designed to hurt GOP candidates.

One of the most-watched contests in Illinois took full shape Tuesday when Tammy Duckworth, an Iraq War veteran and former assistant secretary of Veterans Affairs in President Barack Obama's administration, filed to run in the new northwest suburban 8th District.

Duckworth, who lost a 2006 congressional bid to Republican U.S. Rep. Peter Roskam that gained national attention, is now poised to challenge Raja Krishnamoorthi in the Democratic primary. Krishnamoorthi, a former state deputy treasurer, lost a Democratic primary battle last year for the state comptroller nomination. Both candidates are from Hoffman Estates.

On the Republican side, freshman Republican U.S. Rep. Joe Walsh, a controversial tea party favorite, was challenged for renomination by Richard Evans of Wheaton and Robert Canfield of Palatine. Walsh is the current 8th District representative but found his McHenry home mapped into the new 14th District, which also includes the residence of fellow first-term GOP U.S. Rep. Randy Hultgren of Winfield.

In the new north suburban 10th District, five Democrats ended up filing for the right to vie against one-term Republican U.S. Rep. Robert Dold of Kenilworth. The Democratic contenders are Ilya Sheyman of Waukegan, Vivek Bavda of Mundelein, Brad Schneider of Deerfield, John Tree of Long Grove and last-day filer Aloys Rutagwibira of Hainesville.

In the new South Side and southwest suburban 1st District, veteran Democratic U.S. Rep. Bobby Rush of Chicago finds himself in a six-way primary for renomination. His opponents include Fred Smith of Evergreen Park and Chicagoans Jordan Sims, Clifford Russell Jr., Raymond Lodato and Harold Bailey.

All told, nearly 80 people filed congressional candidacy petitions in the state's 18 new districts with the State Board of Elections. The districts are required to be redrawn every 10 years following the federal census. Illinois lost one of its 19 seats because its population growth was exceeded by other states in the last decade.

Not everyone will stay on the March 20 primary ballot, however. Candidates who filed petitions still could face objection challenges designed to knock them off. The period for challenging candidacy petitions runs Wednesday through Jan. 4, state elections officials said.

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