

## **For candidate Stephene Moore, congressional seat could be historic**

Sun, Apr. 11, 2010

By STEVE KRASKE  
The Kansas City Star

Democrat Stephene Moore will attempt to do what, apparently, no spouse has ever done before — succeed her still-living husband in Congress.

Records show that 46 wives have won seats on the Hill after the deaths of their husbands who held the posts before.

“There’s not a situation exactly like it,” said Anthony Wallis, a researcher for the U.S. House historian.

But days after Rep. Dennis Moore’s wife announced her run for Kansas’ 3rd District, partisans remain split on whether she will make it into the history books.

Republicans insist she’s diving head-first into a piranha pool. With President Barack Obama in the White House, even her husband could not have won a seventh term this year, they said.

“She has a strike against her which Dennis never did, and that is the last 12 months of what the Democrats have done,” said former Johnson County Republican Party Chairman Jay Shadwick. “This is not going to be a good time for Democrats.”

Not so fast, said John Gibson, a former Johnson County Democratic Party chairman. “She can win it. She absolutely can win it,” Gibson said. “The district has shown a willingness to vote for a moderate Democrat. That certainly is what Stephene is.”

Moore, 56, is the only Democrat who has filed. Six Republicans have crowded their primary field, including former state Sen. Nick Jordan, who was the 2008 GOP nominee for the seat, and state Rep. Kevin Yoder, who has raised \$500,000.

Wallis said the only woman who succeeded her husband for a reason other than death was Rep. Katherine Langley of Kentucky, a Republican.

Her husband, Rep. John Langley, resigned in January 1926 after an ethics conviction. In the special election the following month, the winner was Republican Andrew Kirk. But then, in the May GOP primary, Katherine Langley decided to run to clear her husband’s name. She beat Kirk.

“That’s the only example I can find of a similar situation,” Wallis said.

Stephene Moore was not the first Democrat to be considered. Democrats waited while former Unified Government Mayor Carol Marinovich and her successor, Joe Reardon, both considered and ultimately passed on campaigns. State Sen. Kelly Kultala of Kansas City, Kan., also was said to be interested.

Moore’s name surfaced only in February, and as recently as the end of March, she was said to be not committed to the race.

But that changed Tuesday with her declaration that she was in.

“I’ve been interested in public issues that have an effect on our communities for a long time,” she said. “That’s not a secret. I’ve lived here in the 3rd District for over 40 years. This is my home.”

She signaled that she would run, much as her husband did, as a conservative Democrat who tried to downplay partisan differences in a district that tilted Republican. “If it’s good for Kansas, that’s all that really matters,” she said.

Moore’s advantages begin with strong name identification, courtesy of her marriage to a congressman. She is a fresh face in a position to re-energize the party base. And she has a sense of how campaigns operate, having watched her husband run six times.

“They do know how to do it,” said University of Kansas political scientist Burdett Loomis.

And the money’s not bad. Federal campaign records show that Dennis Moore has \$443,115 in his campaign account.

Although prohibited from transferring that money directly into his wife’s campaign account, he could give it all to a party committee, such as the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee or the Kansas Democratic Party.

He cannot designate how the committee spends it. But the way things work in Washington is that a major donation to a committee typically results in a big chunk being spent on a designated candidate’s behalf.

“There are always ways to make money flow,” Loomis said.

So Stephene Moore could benefit from TV ads or mailings funded by the party committee.

She also begins with a familiarity of the issues gleaned over years of kicking them around with her husband.

In an interview Tuesday with The Kansas City Star, Moore laid out positions on leading issues.

She said she would have voted for health care reform and cap-and-trade and against the big bank bailout measure, observing that it lacked adequate oversight.

Republicans relish the opportunity to win back the seat they lost in 1998. Obama's low approval scores will rub off on Moore, they said. A mid-March SurveyUSA poll showed the president with a 37 percent approval rating in Kansas and 61 percent disapproval.