

South Washington County Bulletin

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Legislative redistricting keeps most of south Washington County together; Housley bumped from district

Redistricting leaves Republicans without a known candidate against Sen. Katie Sieben, and Democrats waiting to hear from potential challengers to Rep. John Kriesel.

By: **Scott Wente** and **Jon Avise**, South Washington County Bulletin

A judicial redistricting decision left much of south Washington County untouched, but drew one line that alters at least the local Senate race this fall.

New legislative district boundaries released Tuesday keep most south Washington County communities together but exclude St. Mary's Point.

St. Mary's Point resident Karin Housley, who nearly beat Sen. Katie Sieben, DFL-Cottage Grove, two years ago, had planned to run against Sieben again in 2012. The new maps put Housley in a different district and prompted questions about who will step forward on the Republican side to challenge Sieben.

"They chopped off St. Mary's Point" and left the rest of the district unchanged, Housley said while analyzing the new maps Tuesday afternoon. Housley said she would not run against incumbent Republicans in her new district, which includes much of northern Washington County.

Senate District GOP chair Kellie Eigenheer called the redrawn map and the exit of Housley's St. Mary's Point hometown from the district "extremely disappointing."

"There are just a lot of decisions to be made in the next couple of weeks," Eigenheer said. She said she had not spoken with Rep. John Kriesel or Rep. Denny McNamara – the district's two Republican House members – about their interest in challenging Sieben.

The redrawn maps keep Kriesel and McNamara in separate House districts.

The district number will switch from 57 to 54 in the next election, but little else changes for the next decade. The cities of Cottage Grove, St. Paul Park, Newport and Afton stay together along with Grey Cloud Island Township, Hastings and Nininger Township. Part of South St. Paul will continue to be included in the local district.

Democrats liked the redrawn district. Senate Minority Leader Tom Bakk, DFL-Cook, said he thinks the redistricting may have made it a big stronger for Democrats. Before, Bakk said it was more of a toss-up district.

While Republicans will need a Senate candidate, Democrats will be looking for a challenger to Kriesel.

House District 57A DFL Chairwoman Diana Tunheim said a number of candidates could come forward in the coming days.

"They'll be coming out as soon as everybody knows" where the new boundaries fall, Tunheim said. "No way are we going to let that seat go unchallenged."

Sieben and Kriesel could not be reached immediately for comment.

McNamara has said he will run for another House term. Hastings resident Joanna Bayers, a Democrat, has already announced plans to run against McNamara this fall.

Don Davis of the Forum Communications Co. State Capitol Bureau contributed to this story.

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