

HOT TOPICS: | Your Florida Snow Photos | Palin Joins Fox News | Maguire Out Of Spider-Man 4 | NFL Scores | Orlando Magic | Detroit Auto Show | Casey Anthony | Tiger Woods



It's easy and affordable to save now
for your child's college education.

Home > Your Local News > News Columnists

Seven election races worth watching

Scott Maxwell



E-mail | Recent columns

Related



READ: Scott Maxwell's
Taking Names the Blog

Previous Central Florida's Top 25 Most
Powerful People



PICTURES: 2008's 25
Most Powerful People
in Central Florida

Multimedia

Florida governor's race

Stories



Play the game: Who are
Central Florida's 25
most powerful people?

Photos from political events in Central
Florida



Read the Political Pulse
blog

Topics

Government

Fires

National Government

See more topics »

Scott Maxwell
TAKING NAMES

10:50 p.m. EST, January 9, 2010

E-mail Print Share Text Size

2010 is shaping up to be a busy political year.

So I'm here to help you ease into the campaign ooze with an early-year primer on seven races worth watching.

(Really, you should be watching them all. But we're taking baby steps.)

For each race, I solicited opinions and predictions from two pure partisans — Orange County **Republican Party** leader **Law Oliver** and Orange County **Democratic Party** leader **Bill Robinson**.

And then I tried to sift through it all and give you the skinny. So let's get started.

State House 35th District

One of the most interesting local races involves State Rep. **Dean Cannon**, the guy who's supposed to be our next house speaker — but only if he can first get *re-elected*.

For the first time, the Republican power-broker from **Winter Park** has a serious, credible challenger — one whom Robinson describes as "the best candidate I've ever worked with." Her name is **Amy Mercado**. She's an executive with the National Mango Board and an activist in the Democratic Party who helped organize support for **Barack Obama**.

What's more, Cannon's once-solid-GOP district has morphed, so that Democrats now outnumber Republicans.

Oliver conceded that Cannon has more of a challenge on his hands than in years past, but pooh-poohed the possibility of him getting ousted. The district still votes Republican, Oliver said, adding that Cannon will have "a startling amount of money."

Money does flow to power. But Robinson said he's not convinced big checks from special interests are what voters crave in a candidate. Plus, he said, Dems will steer money Mercado's way as well, making this legislative battle "easily the most exciting race."

Still, the race is Cannon's to lose.

U.S. Senate

Charlie, Marco. Charlie, Marco. Charlie, Marco.

Those two names are pretty much the only ones you've heard about in the U.S. Senate race. And Democrat **Kendrick Meek** is fine with that.

While Republicans **Charlie Crist** and **Marco Rubio** are busy pummeling each other with nasty attacks — sometimes twice a day — Meek is traveling the state and building a war-chest of his own.

Meek's certainly the underdog. But he's smart, savvy — and may surprise those who underestimate him. He's a former highway trooper with a big build and wide grin.

In fact, between Charlie's looks, Marco's dimples and Kendrick's affability, this may be the best-looking and most charming group of candidates you'll ever see trying to beat the snot out of one another.

The 8th Congressional District

Alan Grayson makes Republicans so crazy they're not thinking straight.

Check It Out



The Day in Pictures

Images from Central Florida and the world



Notable Deaths

See photos of the famous who passed away this year.

KANE'S FURNITURE designer rooms for less

CLICK HERE! GOING ON NOW!

SEMI-ANNUAL CLEARANCE

EVERYTHING ON SALE UP TO 50% OFF*

Worth a Look



Going to Disney?

Do Disney the smart way. Click here for ticket deals, resort reviews and other insider tips.



Got stuff to sell?

Post it on ZooZag.com and sell it quick!



Scores of big-name Republicans (from **Rich Crotty** to **Dan Webster**) have flapped their gums about challenging Grayson, only to cower when asked to back up their talk with action.

Still, a bunch of lesser-known candidates, including several tea partiers, have actually filed papers. And Oliver remains confident that Republicans will oust the freshman Democrat — "as long as we don't nominate a kook."

Robinson, however, said Republicans underestimate Grayson's appeal to Americans who like seeing him rattling cages and picking on the special interests. "Once you get past the hype and look under the hood," Robinson said, "this is a guy who has gone to Washington to look out for nickels and dimes."

Grayson also fires up his base — and their wallets..

The rest

The 24th Congressional District. If both party heads ooze (over-)confidence about Grayson's race, it's precisely the opposite for Democrat **Suzanne Kosmas**. Each party leader predicted victory for his side — but with less certainty. Unlike Grayson, Kosmas has actually ticked off many within her own party for siding with Republicans on major issues like health care. In fact, she's already drawn a primary opponent in former **Winter Springs** mayor **Paul Partyka**. The Republicans have several candidates as well, with former cop State Rep. **Sandy Adams** probably the most formidable.

Orange County mayor. Look for former commissioner **Teresa Jacobs** to give this race a needed jolt when she jumps in. Already in the crowded field are three current commissioners with respectable chances: **Bill Segal**, **Linda Stewart** and **Mildred Fernandez** ... with odds in that order and Stewart as the potential sleeper for the whole shebang.

Orange County school chair. This is the most surprising contest — surprising because there's only one well-known entrant in this race for the completely new, powerful post of countywide school chair. It's former State Rep. **Bill Sublette**, a Republican who has amassed a ton of support and money from establishment members on both sides of the aisle. **Robinson said he'd like to find a challenger — not for partisan reasons, but because Sublette seems so entrenched with the power players that Robinson thinks the "have-nots" would like a candidate as well.** Countered Oliver: "It's hard for a lot of Democrats to get that upset about Bill Sublette. He's not a fire-breathing, right-wing radical."

Governor. Democrat **Alex Sink** and Republican **Bill McCollum** both say that zzzzzzz Oh, sorry. I dozed off for a moment there. That is to say this race ain't exactly a barn-burner yet. Both candidates are busy trading jobs, but haven't given voters much of a reason to get too excited about either one. GOP State Sen. **Paula Dockery** may shake things up. But look for the two frontrunners to hone their messages over the coming months for this race that looks like a toss-up right now.

Scott Maxwell can be reached at smaxwell@orlandosentinel.com or 407-420-6141.

Related stories

Around the Web

- [Polling and Political Wrap-Up, 1/8/10](#) | [dailykos.com](#)

POWERED BY **sphere**

 E-mail  Print  Digg  Twitter  Facebook  StumbleUpon  Share

COMMENTS (21) | [Add Comment](#)

Kendrick Meek, the Myth of Sisyphus and whether Dan Gelber regrets dropping out of the US Senate race.

<http://bit.ly/4DQkNV>

[SaintPetersblog \(01/12/2010, 7:48 AM\)](#)

[Report Comment](#)

Mr. Maxwell... We are pretty sure that you will be writing about ALL the Orange County School Board Candidates in your next column. However, one particular race to watch is the one for Orange County School Board District #1. Why? Current Chairperson Cadle has serious competition with Jacqueline Centeno. Ms. Centeno is a parent, educator, and community leader. I would like to see articles regarding the rest of the candidates for the School Board. At this point the school board has many challenges and we need to know...who is who!

Jose I. Bosque, J.D.

[Ismaelito \(01/10/2010, 9:29 PM\)](#)

[Report Comment](#)

Mr. Cannon is in more difficulty regarding re-election than he thinks.

[MrKiamoto \(01/10/2010, 7:33 PM\)](#)

[Report Comment](#)

[See All comments](#)

AUTOMATICALLY
DOUBLE-CHECKS
YOUR RETURN.

H&R Block At Home™.

Get it Right.

Get It Right.™

File for FREE ▶

H&R BLOCK
At Home®

More Features



Florida Beach Guide

Check out photos of best beaches on the Dr. Beach list . Plan your trip with this guide.



Florida Springs Guide

See best photos from dozens of Florida springs. Get more info in our guide.



Greetings from Florida

See photos from classic Florida postcards.



Bike Week through the years

See photos and videos from Bike Week.

In Sports...

Game in Sacramento will be a homecoming for Orlando Magic forwards Ryan Anderson and Matt Barnes

Holtz: Urban Meyer 'feeling good' and should be fine for Gators in 2010

Florida Gators lose more key players to NFL draft

Orlando Magic notes: Vince Carter does not practice Monday in Sacramento, still considered "day-to-day"

In Business...

IKEA cooks up solution to cold oven

Orlando Fashion Square tenant wants action to quell recent store closings

EA lowers guidance for full year

Florida rejects Progress Energy's request for rate hike

In News...

Are 19 slayings the work of serial killers?

Was Tiger Woods the victim of a false child abuse report?

Get ready for a gradual warm-up

Heating problems persist in Orange schools

Also on OrlandoSentinel.com ...

Take a Tour



Through our gallery of the strange

Notable Deaths



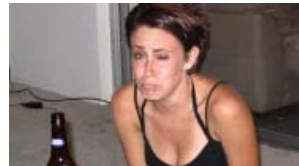
Famous folk who've died in the last year

Year in Review



Best of Orlando Sentinel Pictures 2009

Casey Anthony



Click here to view her Photobucket album

Hangover Hallelujahs



Find effective cures for the dog, or dogs, that bit ya!



Deltona: Mom Discovers \$3 Whitening Trick

Dentists Do NOT want you to know about this teeth whitening secret.



Deltona: Local Mom Makes \$77/hr Online!

Unemployed Mom Makes \$6,397/Month Working Online! Read How She Did It.

services

Site Index
Advertise With Us
Customer Service
Home Delivery
Search Archives
Buy our Photo Gifts
50% Off Dining Deals
Newspaper Back Issues
Sports Fan Shop
Sweepstakes
Where to buy London Daily Mail & Sun of London

news

El Sentinel (En Español)
Lottery Results
Public Records
Space & Science
Neighborhoods

money

Progressions
Investing Tips
Technology Tips
PR Newswire Releases

weather

Hurricane HQ
Pollen Forecast
Marine

sports

Scores / Stats
50% off Golf Deals

entertainment

Find Restaurants
Find Bars & Clubs
Find Events & Festivals
Find Concerts & Music
Events
Drinks
Movie Times
TV Listings
Books

stay in touch

Send a News Tip
Get Alerts
Get Alerts On Phone
Get Us on Kindle
Get Newsletters
Our Twitter feeds

classified

Place an Ad
Apts & Rentals
Cars
Foreclosures
Furniture
Garage sales
Items For Sale
Jobs
Pets
Real Estate

Orlando Sentinel

Baltimore Sun Chicago Tribune Daily Press Hartford Courant Los Angeles Times Orlando Sentinel Sun Sentinel
The Morning Call
Daily Disney Sentinel Article Collections Privacy Policy Work For Us Contact Us Terms of Service
Orlando Sentinel, 633 N. Orange Avenue, Orlando, FL 32801

A Tribune Web site