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The Associated Press State & Local Wire

September 7, 2006 Thursday 7:52 PM GMT

SECTION: POLITICAL NEWS

LENGTH: 558 words

HEADLINE: News and notes from the campaign trail in Tennessee

DATELINE: MEMPHIS Tenn.

BODY:

Pledging solidarity beyond racial divisions, the mayors of Memphis and Shelby County threw their support behind the congressional bid of state Sen. Steve Cohen.

"Steve Cohen is the best-qualified candidate for this leadership role," Memphis Mayor Willie Herenton said at a news conference Wednesday outside City Hall. "I felt it was time in this community on this occasion that we show solidarity that will cut across political ideology, race, ethnocentrism, any kind of prejudice and to support a man who's eminently qualified for this role."

Herenton was joined by Shelby County Mayor A C Wharton, Cohen, civil rights leader Maxine Smith, retired Judge Russell Sugarmon and others.

Cohen, a white Democrat, has generally enjoyed wide support from black constituents in the Memphis area during 24 years as a state senator. Both Wharton and Herenton are the first black men elected to their positions.

The endorsements were dismissed by Cohen's independent opponent in the race, Jake Ford. Ford is the brother of current 9th District congressman and Democratic U.S. Senate nominee Harold Ford Jr.

"I don't think any one person can come in and offer an endorsement that would carry the community," Jake Ford said. "I respect both (mayors) but I don't agree with their perspectives on this race or their choice for Congress."

Ford said the race would be determined by grassroots campaigning, not high-profile endorsements. Businessman and teacher Mark White is the Republican candidate.

"I think these endorsements make what was already going to be a difficult candidacy next to impossible," said Marcus Pohlmann, a political science professor at Rhodes College, of Ford's effort.

Cohen campaign: <http://www.cohenforcongress.com/>

White campaign: <http://www.votemarkwhite.com/>

Jake Ford campaign: <http://jakefordforcongress.com/>

REPLACING BOWERS:

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (AP) The Shelby County Democratic Party said it will meet next week to choose a candidate to replace former state Sen. Kathryn Bowers, who's charged in the Tennessee Waltz investigation, on the Nov. 7 ballot.

Bowers cited poor health in resigning her District 33 Senate seat effective last week and said she would not seek re-election despite an overwhelming win in the Democratic primary last month.

Bowers this week asked a judge to set a trial date for federal extortion charges against her. She is accused of accepting \$11,500 in bribes from FBI agents posing as businessmen seeking government favors for a company called E-Cycle Management.

The county Democratic Primary told WPTY-TV it will hold a convention Sept. 14 to pick Bowers' replacement. The Democratic candidate will face Republican Michael Floyd.

#### CAMPUS DEMOCRATS

KNOXVILLE, Tenn. (AP) The University of Tennessee College Democrats say their membership has grown fivefold in the past 12 months.

The UT Democrats said they had about 200 members last year and now have more than 1,000, helping earn the group the Federation of the Year award at this summer's College Democrats National Convention.

The College Democrats' adviser, Will Jennings, told The Daily Beacon campus newspaper that the membership increase over the past year is due in part to "national frustration" with President Bush and because of the party's nominee for U.S. Senate in Tennessee.

"The Harold Ford campaign is really targeting young people for support," Jennings said.

LOAD-DATE: September 8, 2006