



May 28, 2009

Democrats turn out for Keene

By Patrick Crowley
pcrowley@nky.com

NEWPORT - As of now, state Rep. Dennis Keene has not drawn an opponent in next year's Statehouse elections.

Keene's campaign held a Thursday night event designed to keep it that way.

In a show of political and financial force, Keene's campaign put on a fundraiser at the Carnegie Event Center that featured many of the top names in state and local Democratic politics, topped by Gov. Steve Beshear and members of House Democratic leadership.

"I'm like a speck of salt in a black pepper shaker," said Keene, one of the few Statehouse Democrats from the region. "I'm a Democrat in Northern Kentucky. And I don't have room to hide. I'm easily found. So I have to be prepared at all times.

"It's tremendous to have the governor's support," he said. "He's do so much for Northern Kentucky and the whole state of Kentucky, for him to come up here is overwhelming, a humbling experience."

Earlier in the day Beshear, Keene and others helped break ground on the \$52 million Northern Kentucky University College of Informatics.

Beshear, a first term Democrat, called Keene a "great state representative for this area."

"He's worked very closely with me to help move this state forward," Beshear said. "I want to see him come back and help us. We're in some tough (economic) times and his leadership is valuable."

Two members of Democratic leadership - Speaker Greg Stumbo of Prestonsburg and Speaker Pro Tem Larry Clark of Louisville - also attended.

"Dennis Keene is my roommate in Frankfort. We've become great friends," Clark said. "He's been very active in trying to help Northern Kentucky. He's a strong voice for his district and for Northern Kentucky."

About 200 people were expected. The campaign did not say Thursday how much money it expected to raise.

Local Democratic leaders also turned out, including state Rep. Arnold Simpson of Covington, Campbell County Democratic Party Chairwoman Sue Orth, Democratic Women's Club President Diana Darnell, Newport Mayor Jerry Peluso, Newport City Commissioners Tom Guidugli and John Hayden, former Newport Commissioner Laura Roberts, Campbell County Commissioner Dave Otto, former state legislator Terry Mann of Fort Thomas, and party activists Paul Whalen and Roger Peterman.

Republicans have not yet fielded a candidate to run against Keene, though Campbell County GOP Chairman Jeff Kidwell has hinted that a Republican could run in the 67th House District race.

Just a few mile from Keene's event, Campbell County Republicans gathered Thursday night in Fort Thomas for the party's Lincoln 100 Club, a fundraising committee that solicits \$100 from 100 contributors.

Kentucky U.S. Sen. Jim Bunning of Southgate, Congressman Geoff Davis of Boone County and 4th District GOP Chairman Kevin Sell were scheduled to speak at the event, held at the home of former party chairwoman Barb Haas.

The 67th House District covers Wilder, Dayton, Bellevue, Newport, Southgate and a portion of Highland Heights.
