



LEGISLATIVE NEWSLETTER

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Governor to Retire: In a stunning move that caught many off guard, Democratic Gov. Bev Perdue announced Thursday she won't seek re-election, marking the first time since gubernatorial succession was allowed in 1980 that a first-term governor did not serve a second term. Perdue, 65, who made history as the state's first woman governor, began office in a recession and never was able to maintain solid polling numbers. She described her decision as an effort to avoid further polarization over the issue of acceptable public schools funding.

Lawmakers, legislative staff, lobbyists, reporters and others were abuzz Thursday morning in and out of legislative meetings after The Washington Post broke the story reporting that Perdue planned to step down, citing anonymous sources. Interestingly, rather than making a public appearance, the governor released a statement.

"A re-election campaign in this already divisive environment will make it more difficult to find any bipartisan solutions," Perdue said in the statement. "I hope this decision will open the door to an honest and bipartisan effort to help our schools."

Scrambling Aftermath: In what would have been a rematch of the 2008 election, Perdue was expected to face Republican Pat McCrory, the former mayor of Charlotte who has held a commanding lead over the governor in consistent polling. Perdue's decision to bow out left Democrats scurrying to offer up a formidable opponent to McCrory, who next week is expected to announce formally that he will run for governor this year. Although Perdue and McCrory had raised roughly the same amount of money moving into January, fundraising for the Democratic incumbent was expected to lag in a bid for a second term.

Democratic Contenders: By late this afternoon, only Lt. Gov. Walter Dalton had announced that he would seek the Democratic nomination for governor this year. Dennis Wicker, the state's lieutenant governor from 1993 to 2001, said, according to WRAL-TV: "It's two weeks from filing

and people had no expectations that they would be looking for a candidate for governor. I think it caught many people off guard.”

Dalton said in a statement Thursday: "Elections are about choices. As a state, we must decide the direction in which we will turn. With this campaign, I choose to look ahead to a brighter future. I choose progress. I choose a future where public education is the foundation of our economy.”

Others Eyeing the Post: Rep. Bill Faison, D-Orange, who has suggested for months that he could oppose Perdue in a primary, said Thursday he wasn't prepared to make an announcement yet, noting that it was Perdue's day – not his. Perdue's 2008 primary opponent, former State Treasurer Richard Moore, said he's considering another bid. “I am not ruling anything out,” Moore said. And U.S. Rep. Brad Miller, who announced plans this week to not seek reelection to Congress, didn't rule out a gubernatorial bid during a conference call with reporters. "I haven't given it a first thought," he said. "There are other qualified candidates out there."

Another congressman, U.S. Rep. Mike McIntyre, suggested in a statement reacting to the news that he is weighing a possible gubernatorial bid. “I love North Carolina; I love serving its people; and I am always open to considering broader opportunities to serve, including the possibility of Governor,” he said.

Charlotte Mayor Anthony Foxx is being mentioned as a potential candidate, and his statement reacting to Perdue's decision seemed to confirm he is considering. “I remain focused on Charlotte and the substantial work ahead,” he said. “I will spend the coming weeks talking with my family and friends about how I could best serve our city and state, and I ask the public and media for some patience as I work through those conversations.”

State Treasurer Janet Cowell and Secretary of State Elaine Marshall quickly ruled out gubernatorial bids. So did Attorney General Roy Cooper, who has long been on a lot of short lists for the Executive Mansion. Four-term Gov. Jim Hunt reportedly said he has no plans to run again.

Other Potential Contenders: Other names circulating late this week as possible candidates included former White House chief of staff Erskine Bowles, former congressman Bob Etheridge and Winston-Salem Mayor Allen Joines. However, Joines said on Twitter that he was “honored” to be named as a potential candidate, but that he had more work to do as mayor

What They're Saying: State GOP chair Robin Hayes said the governor's decision to step down at the end of her first term wasn't unexpected. Hayes blamed scandals and "failures of leadership," causing people to "lose faith in her abilities to lead the state." Other Republican leaders were more diplomatic.

House Speaker Thom Tillis, R-Mecklenburg, said: "Whether we agree with her politics or not, we all should respect her for her commitment to North Carolina over these many years." Tillis

said he hoped that the Republican-controlled legislature and governor could now work together on some issues that could help her legacy. Democrats praised Perdue as a hard-working governor.

"I think she worked very hard. She got dealt a tough hand," said Sen. Dan Blue, D-Wake, and former state House speaker, referring to Perdue facing both a tight budget and a Republican legislature. "She was put on the defensive."

North Carolina Democratic Party Chairman David Parker predicted the party "will have no trouble selecting a strong gubernatorial candidate." He expressed confidence in winning the governor's office in the November election

Lack of Backing: The Perdue campaign had raised \$1.3 million during the last six months of 2011 and stood on roughly equal financial footing with McCrory. Still, published reports had chronicled how several prominent, wealthy donors had defected to the McCrory camp. Sources told The Insider that labor groups also were not planning on giving to Perdue as they had in 2008, which likely would have left her with less money than McCrory. Labor leaders had become increasingly convinced that she would lose and didn't want to put money into a race that might otherwise benefit winning candidates sympathetic to their aims, the sources said.

Tedesco Bid for School Superintendent: A Wake County Board of Education member at the front of some of the district's most controversial issues has announced his plans to run for state superintendent of public instruction. John Tedesco said Thursday he wants to improve the quality of education throughout the state, and blamed current state schools superintendent June Atkinson and Gov. Perdue for teacher layoffs and other problems. The Garner resident was part of the Republican-backed majority that overturned a decade-old student diversity program in the state's largest school district.

Quotes of the Week: *"You can die of heartbreak."*

- Bobby Bowden, former football coach at FSU, in commenting on the death last Sunday of Penn State coach Joe Paterno, who passed away after a bout with lung cancer following his firing as coach after amassing the most wins in major NCAA football.

"Honk if you love Jesus. Text if you want to see him."

- Bumper Sticker Spotted