

Election 2012: U.S. Senate races for Florida, Republican and Democratic primaries

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Editor's note

This is the eighth of a daily series of Q&A reports with the candidates in Collier and Lee counties, counting down to the Aug. 14 primary election.

Poll

Who's your choice, assuming these two win their party nominations in 2012?

- Democrat Bill Nelson
- Republican Connie Mack

VOTE

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The race for U.S. Senate is heating up.

Four Republicans and two Democrats are battling to be their respective party's nominee.

On the Republican side, U.S. Rep. Connie Mack IV, R-Fort Myers, is hoping to follow in the footsteps of his father, former Sen. Connie Mack III. And while most analysts place Mack in the winner's circle come Aug. 14, it's not a sure thing.

Running against Mack in the Republican primary is Ave Maria resident Marielena Stuart, retired Col. Mike McCalister and former U.S. Rep. Dave Weldon.

The Republican primary may be the race to watch, but Democrats won't be sitting out this primary. Democratic Sen. Bill Nelson will face challenger Glenn Burkett.

Florida is a closed primary state, which means only Republicans and Democrats can vote in their party's primary. The winners face off in the general election in November with several other candidates running without party affiliation or as write-ins.

The winner will go on to serve a six-year term in the U.S. Senate.

This is the eighth in a series of reports about candidates on the Aug. 14 ballot.

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Editor's note: U.S. Rep. Connie Mack, R-Fort Myers, didn't respond to repeated requests to fill out this questionnaire.



Mike McCalister

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Name: Col. Mike McCalister

Born: Nov. 29, 1951

How long you've lived in your county: I have lived in Florida for about 18 years and currently live in Hillsborough County

Education: Bachelor's of Science in agriculture from Southeast Missouri State University; a graduate of the Command and General Staff College; a Ph.D. in management from the Union Institute; completed the Air War College Curriculum, and completed the Harvard Program on Senior Executive Leadership

Family: Son, 32

Political affiliation: Republican

Current position: Retired colonel and owner of a small canary tree farm

Q. What is the first thing you would do if elected?

A. We need to repeal Obamacare. And we need to have a very comprehensive national security policy that protects our jobs and industries, protects our national security and vital interests, helps us gain energy independence, stops international laws and agendas, and maintains a very strong national defense.

Q. What would you do to make your community a better place to live?

A. I would work to get the federal government out of the way of our state's and citizens' rights and to decrease unnecessary regulations that are prohibitive to the growth of jobs and the economy. I would also work to secure the border.

Q. What makes you the most qualified for this position?

A. We need to look at this just like we do when we're hiring in the workplace. Look at the committees of the U.S. Senate and at the

Constitutional duties, and I have the best credentials and official experience to conduct those.

Q. What distinguishes you from your opponents?

A. I think what most distinguishes me is I have the best credentials and accredited education, such as agriculture and business, national defense and national security, and global business to perform the duties of the U.S. Senate.



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Name: Marielena Stuart

Born: In 1956

How long you've lived in your county: I have lived in Collier County since August 2007

Education: Linguistics, international and legal conference interpreter; also studied and trained as a concert pianist

Family: Husband and two children

Political affiliation: Republican

Current position: Republican candidate for the U.S. Senate

Q. What is the first thing you would do if elected?

A. Dismantle the socialist programs and entities that are destroying the American economy — starting with Obamacare and the EPA. Stop Sustainable Development (Agenda 21) and Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs), which put profits and resources in the hands of powerful private interest collectives (socialists) who seek power and control. PPPs do not represent the interests of the taxpayers.

Q. What would you do to make your community a better place to live?

A. I would eradicate sustainable development in Ave Maria and dismantle the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) called Ave Maria Stewardship Community District (the "special purpose local government" in Ave Maria). The NDN called Ave Maria, "a town without a vote, now and forever." PPPs are socialist scams promoted by globalists to implement the United Nations Agenda 21/Sustainable Development initiative, with the goal of destroying the structure of governments that represent the people.

Q. What makes you the most qualified for this position?

A. My authoritative experience living under communism and fighting against it, as well as fighting against international socialism. My experience battling sustainable development since

2008 — right here in Collier County. My pro-life actions battling against what became known as a massive taxpayer bailout of a genetic facility, involved in the world of human embryonic stem cell research (The Jackson Lab), which wanted to locate to the sustainable development community of Ave Maria.

Q. What distinguishes you from your opponents?

A. None of my opponents have a background like mine: I never ran for office before. I'm a citizen-candidate in the tradition of Ronald Reagan. I'm an authentic social and fiscal conservative. I do not go along with the moderate GOP approach. I can communicate in other languages, including French and Spanish — a great advantage during discussions of treaties and agreements with leaders and representatives of other nations — including every nation in the Western Hemisphere.



PHOTO BY PHOTO PROVIDED

Dave Weldon

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Name: Dave Weldon

Born: Aug. 31, 1953

How long you've lived in your county: 25 years

Education: Bachelor's of science, SUNY Stony Brook; Doctor of Medicine, SUNY Buffalo School of Medicine, Buffalo, N.Y.

Family: Wife, Nancy, of 32 years, two children

Political affiliation: Republican

Current position: Private citizen; practicing physician (internist); former member of Congress (1995-2008)

Q. What is the first thing you would do if elected?

A. Work to repeal Obamacare. As a physician and former member of the U.S. House of Representatives, (1995-2008), I know how flawed this law is; it is too costly and it transfers decision-making from patients and doctors to bureaucrats. We need to be protecting patients and helping to strengthen their ability to work with their health-care professionals to provide the best health care available, not create another government monster to play Big Brother with our health care.

Q. What would you do to make your community a better place to live?

A. Return our nation to a smaller, more responsive government attuned to the constitutional design created by our founding

fathers. As I did when serving in Congress before, and as I have done since then, I would work to protect and promote the family, allow our economic system to flourish with as little regulation and oversight from our federal government as possible, and guard the rights of the unborn from forces in our nation who would seek to devalue and harm them.

Q. What makes you the most qualified for this position?

A. I have a proven history as a lawmaker serving in the best interest of the people, not a party or any special interest. My background positions me well for this job. I have worked my way through college, served in the Army, have been married for 32 years to my wife, Nancy, we raised two children, and 14 years of service in the U.S. House as a congressman.

Q. What distinguishes you from your opponents?

A. Health care has emerged as a major issue for our nation. I am a physician and I know the issues very well and I can bring that background to the debates in Washington. Also, I am not a career politician. I believe in term limits and I limited myself retiring from the U.S. House, voluntarily after serving for seven terms. We need officials in Washington interested in doing what is right for the nation and not their next career move.



Glenn Burkett

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Name: Glenn Burkett

Born: March 4, 1950

Education: K-12 graduated R.E. Lee High School, Thomaston, Ga.; Navy Vietnam War, veteran trained as a medic; college attended on G.I. Bill and working three jobs; Gordon Jr. College, Barnesville, Ga.; Associate's in Arts from Pensacola Jr. College, Pensacola; Bachelor's degree from West Florida University in Pensacola; post-graduate work at Florida State University in Tallahassee; post-graduate work at University of Florida in Gainesville

Family: Mother (87 years old) on no prescription drugs; two brothers; all live in Thomaston, Ga.

Political affiliation: Democrat (hybrid) which means I would vote for legislation with the best ideas to benefit all Floridians, whether the idea came from a Democrat, Republican or independent

Current position: Successful natural health business owner

Q. What is the first thing you would do if elected?

A. I would use my expertise in health care to inform and educate all our citizens of all ages about their role of accountability that they have to ensure that they enjoy a healthy lifestyle to decrease the cost of Medicare and Medicaid. The cost of decreasing health of Americans will bankrupt families, Florida and the United States of America. The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act can only work as good as the participants.

Q. What would you do to make your community a better place to live?

A. 1) Jobs, job security. 2) Connecting our students through apprenticeships ... to inspire our students to learn to be better prepared to be employed. 3) Our country is built on immigration of many races of people. We should continue to celebrate different cultures. 4) Safety for traffic and pedestrians. 5) Help seniors who can no longer maintain their house, yard or pets. 6) Ensure the quality of our air, water and beaches.

Q. What makes you the most qualified for this position?

A. I have the willingness to stand up for all of us to have a better way of life and for our children and grandchildren. Our middle class financial status has been set back 30 years. I do not believe that one political party or the other has all the right ideas. I

support the Bush tax cuts. We do not need more taxes. We need accountability for what our tax money is spent on.

Q. What distinguishes you from your opponent?

A. I support private enterprise such as SpaceX to take over for NASA. I could help improve the health-care law so Republicans, Democrats and independents would like it and understand it. I support the U.S. government's No. 1 responsibility is national security, which includes protecting our borders. We need to join forces with the government and private sector to feed hungry American children and seniors with quality, nutritious food, which would in turn pay for itself.



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Bill Nelson

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Name: Sen. Bill Nelson

Born: Sept. 29, 1942

How long you've lived in your county: A fifth-generation Floridian, born in Miami on Sept. 29, 1942, and now residing in Orlando

Education: Graduate of Yale University and the University of Virginia Law School; admitted to The Florida Bar in 1968

Family: Grace Cavert Nelson, 2 grown children: Bill Nelson, Jr.; Nan Ellen Nelson Dixon

Political affiliation: Democrat

Current position: U.S. senator

Q. What is the first thing you would do if elected?

A. I believe our first priorities should be putting Floridians back to work and protecting and expanding the middle class. I will fight economic inequality and unfairness and stand up for the folks who work hard, play by the rules, and are trying to get ahead.

Q. What would you do to make your community a better place to live?

A. See above.

Q. What makes you the most qualified for this position?

A. I've spent my whole life fighting for Florida and have had the privilege of public service. I'm in this race to fight for Florida and our country — not the special interests. Just ask BP. When the big oil company tried to cover up how bad the spill was in the Gulf of

Mexico, I took them on and exposed their lies. And I'm happy to tell you there still are no oil rigs off the state of Florida — because I was one of the few who fought them. I've stood up to some pretty big insurance firms and drug companies, too.

Q. What distinguishes you from your opponent?

A. My real opponents are shadowy groups linked to millionaires and billionaires who are trying to buy the election. They've already bought millions of dollars of untrue TV attack ads. They don't care about Florida. They care about protecting their own agendas in Washington. I'm in this race for Florida and our country — not the special interests.

NAPLES DAILY NEWS POLL RESULTS:

