

Who is ready to lead?

Eastern Oklahoma County voters will fill three vacancies in the State House

By Van Mitchell
Contributing Writer

Midwest City voters will head to the polls this November to decide three local House of Representative races to replace two term-limited legislators and one legislator who decided not to seek re-election.

Voters will decide on replacing Rep. Gary Banz, R-Midwest City who has served House District 101 and is now term-limited, Rep. Mike Shelton, D-District 97 who is also term-limited and Rep. Charlie Joyner, R-District 95 who decided not to seek re-election.

The candidates seeking to replace Banz are Democrat Cheryl Mooneyham-Hessman of Choctaw, Republican Tess Teague of Choctaw.

Democrat James Cook of Oklahoma City will face off against Republican Roger Ford of Oklahoma City to replace Joyner.

Republican Tonni Canaday of Spencer will face off against the winner of the Aug. 23 Democratic runoff between Jason Lowe of Oklahoma City and Chris Harrison of Oklahoma City to replace Shelton.

Banz served in the United States Army from 1968-70 and the U.S. Army Reserve from

1982-1990. He was awarded the Army Commendation Medal in 1970 and was awarded the Army Achievement Medal in 1985.

He also taught at Putnam City, Ada and Midwest City High schools and has served as the executive director of the Oklahoma Honors Flight since 2009.

Banz said he favors term-limits but would like to see it extended from the current 12 year limit to 16 years.

"I am in favor of term-limits," Banz said. "On the front end I would acknowledge it is pretty easy to argue either side of the issue. The average length of time for service of a House member since term-limits has been implemented is almost identical to the average amount of time a House member served prior to term-limits. The difference is the turnover of leadership."

Banz said there was a propensity of a small group individuals to control the leadership positions and that was partly behind the push for term-limits.

"With term-limits you are guaranteed

a much more rapid turnover in those leadership positions," Banz said. "The downside to it is what happens to institutional memory and what is the influence of the bureaucracy that remains and the lobby community. There is a balance to be struck there."

Banz said although there will be new faces for Midwest City voters to consider this fall, he doesn't believe that voters will see a change in the way they are represented.

"The natural attrition has taken its toll," he said. "There will be three brand new people in those areas and there all quality people in each races. People will speak and choose their voice and they won't miss a beat."

Joyner is a retired fire chief from the Midwest City Fire Department where he served 22 years. He was also operations manager for Tony Caesar's Flower & Greenhouses, his wife's family-owned business until the business was sold in 1999.

Joyner said it was time for him to leave public office.

"I have been in public service for 38 years," Joyner said. "I spent 22 years with the fire department and

Candidates

HOUSE 95 James Cook (D), Roger Ford (R)

HOUSE 97 Jason Lowe (D), Chris Harrison (D), Tonni Canaday (R)

HOUSE 101 Cheryl Mooneyham-Hessman (D), Tess Teague (R)

DATES State House District 95 Democratic primary runoff is Aug. 23. All three general elections are set for Nov. 8.

six years with the city council and 10 years with the House of Representatives. I just turned 76 and I wanted to spend time with my family and go places when I wanted to."

Joyner said every new representative will go through a learning curve but adds that veteran leadership will help tutor the freshman legislators and constituents shouldn't miss a beat.

"They will have the opportunity to meet with some very smart people and learn from them," Joyner said.

Shelton was unavailable for comment by press time.

