

LOCAL & REGIONAL

Former state auditor will run for state senate

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By Louis Porter Vermont Press Bureau

MONTPELIER – Former State Auditor Randy Brock said Tuesday he will run for the State Senate from Franklin County rather than seek his old job of state auditor by challenging current Auditor Tom Salmon.

He will face off against two incumbent Democrats.

Brock lost to Salmon by the slimmest of margins two years ago after a very unusual recount of votes. But Brock, who lost by 102 votes out of 111,770 cast, decided not to run for his old job again this year in large part because Salmon, a U.S. Navy Reservist, will be deployed overseas through the election. Brock, a former U.S. Army captain and military policeman, served in Vietnam.

Brock said that as a state senator he can be part of the solution to issues facing the state, such as a weakening economy, high property taxes and high prices for fuel and goods.

"I don't think we should be pointing fingers at who is at fault. That is what mires us down," Brock said by telephone Tuesday.

"The Legislature has got to change in order to move Vermont forward. I want to be part of that process," said Brock, a Swanton Republican. "I want to be a part of the solution and not sitting on the side pointing fingers."

Franklin County now sends two Democrats to the state Senate. Both Sens. Don Collins and Sara Kittell said they plan on running for re-election. Collins is the chairman of the Senate Education Committee, while Kittell heads the Agriculture Committee.

Kittell said she hopes to continue work on furthering the state's agriculture industry and the local production of food.

"I think we have a great opportunity to strengthen our food system," Kittell said. "We have built some infrastructure in the last few years and it is a great time to expand that."

Collins said he believes more can be done on workforce development and training issues in

the Legislature.

"Any time you have a competition it is going to be tough," Collins said. "We are in a county that has pretty active participation by voters. I expect a tough race."

They expect Brock will spend more during the election, Collins and Kittell both said.

"I always get outspent," Collins said. "I am going to work hard because I want to go back to Montpelier."

But Brock said although he plans on rolling the roughly \$5,000 he has left in his auditor's campaign fund over to the Senate race, he does not expect to pour a lot of his own money into the campaign.

"Vermonters don't particularly like people who self-finance or over-finance a campaign. I don't plan on doing that," Brock said. "It is just not the way to campaign in Vermont effectively."

"This is a Senate race. It is not the presidency," he added.

Last election Brock was running to retain the auditor's job in a year in which Vermont and the rest of the country swung towards Democratic candidates.

Some of the same feelings about the direction of the country and the Bush administration remain this time, Brock acknowledged.

"Many Vermonters are clearly not happy with the current administration in Washington," Brock said. But, he added, "I am a Vermont Republican. I am not a Washington Republican."

"I view myself as part of the sensible center," he added.