

If waiting in long lines at the polling places, after an already long day at work, is not your cup of tea, then early voting at the office of the Election Commission offers an agreeable alternative. The office is located at 111 East Locust Street in Lafayette, across the street from the Lafayette Police Department.

Early voting for the upcoming State Primary and County General August 7 election begins on Friday, July 18 at 8 a.m. and runs through noon on Saturday, August 2. The office will be open for early voting each weekday from 8 p.m. till 4:30, and on Saturdays (July 19, 26, and August 2) from 8 p.m. till noon.

On the County General ticket will be candidates for Assessor of Property, Road Supervisor, and District 19 County Commissioner.

Incumbent Rick Shoulders will run against Jeff Hughes for Assessor of Property.

Candidates Audie Cook, Kenny Patterson, and Jerry Ray will challenge incumbent Road Supervisor Charles "Chop" Porter.

Benton Bartley, present District 19 County Commissioner, will run unopposed for the position.

Three School Board seats will be up for the vote: Ronald Birdwell and Mark Sircy will face off for the District 1, 2, 11, 20 seat; Chuck Sandifer and John Wheeley for the District 3, 4, 15, 16 seat; Quinn Marlow and Stephen Walton for the District 13, 14, 17, 18 seat.

Voters will also be choosing representatives for the U.S. Senate, the U.S. House of Representatives, and the Tennessee House of Representatives. Macon Countians won't be voting for representatives in the Tennessee Senate, as only even numbered districts will be chosen this year. Macon County lies in the 17th Tennessee Senate District.

Incumbent Bart Gordon runs unopposed for his 6th Congressional District seat in the U.S. House of Representatives.

The U.S. Senate seat sees democrats Mark E. Clayton, Gary G. Davis, Kenneth Eaton, Leonard D. Ladner, Wm Mike Padgett, Robert D. Tuke; and republican Lamar Alexander facing off.

For the 40th Representative District seat in the Tennessee House of Representatives: democrats Cleveland Derrick Bain, Jeff Barrett, Steven K. Cantrell, Gayla C. Hendrix, Carl (Hix) Jones, Dean Sircy, and Sara Marie Smith; and republicans Nicky Rittenberry and Terry Lynn Weaver will run to fill the seat left open by Frank Buck's retirement.

Diane Cline, Election Commissioner, applied for and received nine extra voting machines from the state this year, so we can cut down on our waiting-in-line-time for the August and November elections. However, early voting will cut down on that wait even further.

About half of Macon County voters vote early, according to Cline, who said early voting makes it much easier on the staff of the Election Commission office. The office has handicap accessible voting machines, and friendly voting deputies to assist with any special needs.

Early voting is a sizable part of the price we pay for each election, which is nothing to sneeze at: the Presidential Preference Election in February cost the taxpayers \$12,000. So vote early, and vote as often as possible.