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The Advocate

Headwaiter gives Blanco the brushoff

The Washington Post reported last week that Gov. Kathleen Blanco and Democratic Party strategist Donna Brazile, a Louisiana native, were body-blocked by a maitre d' "like a couple of schoolgirl groupies" during a recent trip to the nation's capital.

Blanco and Brazile were eating at Filomena Ristorante in the Georgetown section of Washington when they noticed crooner Tony Bennett at a nearby table.

Blanco, who arrived with an entourage of three security guards, tried to pass a note to Bennett, but was blocked by the headwaiter.

The crooner, however, recognized Blanco, and she received "hugs and kisses and pictures," Brazile was quoted in the newspaper as saying.

Blanco aide to run for legislative seat
Gov. Kathleen Blanco's local government liaison, Sam Jones, is not ready to leave state politics when his boss does.

Blanco is not seeking re-election this fall. However, Jones plans to run for the Legislature.

Jones is interested in Rep. Jack Smith's District 50 seat. Term limits prevent Smith, D-Stephensville, from running for the House again. District 50 includes St. Mary Parish and part of Assumption and Iberia parishes.

Jones served several terms as mayor of Franklin before going to work for Blanco.

"I want to continue the effort made with education and economic development, in particular as it applies to my district and the rest of the state," Jones said.

Landrieu doubts singer's dedication

Lt. Gov. Mitch Landrieu is questioning whether country singer Sammy Kershaw really plans to hit the campaign trail to run against him.

“The guy’s on tour all summer outside the state. That’s what I’ve been told by my country music adviser,” Landrieu said Friday.

Kershaw’s media adviser, Jaci Russo, said the performer sings on the weekends and campaigns during the week.

“I would equate his touring to other people’s hunting and fishing. It’s something he does primarily on Friday and Saturday nights,” she said.

The July 2007 tour schedule posted on Kershaw’s Web site shows only two concerts on a Friday or a Saturday. The rest of the concerts are on a Sunday, Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday.

Landrieu, a Democrat from New Orleans, is running for re-election this fall. Kershaw, a Republican who rents a home in Kaplan, Rep. Gary Beard, R-Baton Rouge, and Thomas Kates, a Democrat from Bogalusa, also want the job. The election is Oct. 20.

Michael Jackson belays Senate run

Rep. Michael Jackson said late last week that he’s dropped plans to run for the state Senate seat held by Sen. Cleo Fields, D-Baton Rouge.

“I’ve reflected on this and decided to run for re-election,” said Jackson, a Democrat who represents a largely midcity District 61. Fields has said he’s running again for the District 61 seat.

No slam-dunk on board appointments

Most of Gov. Kathleen Blanco’s recent appointments to state boards and commissions made it through required Senate confirmation during the session that ended Thursday.

But there were some exceptions, including two appointments to gambling boards.

The Senate refused to confirm Blanco's pick of Kay Begue of New Roads for a spot on the Louisiana State Lottery Corp. board. Lottery board members get paid \$15,000 a year.

Meanwhile, Blanco rescinded her recent appointment of Calvin Braxton of Natchitoches to the Louisiana Gaming Control Board.

Blanco named Braxton on June 8, which didn't give the Senate time to do a complete background check, press secretary Marie Centanni said. The Senate panel charged with screening the appointees let Blanco know of the problem.

Rather than have Braxton's nomination rejected, the governor withdrew it, she said. Centanni said Braxton cannot be reappointed.

Rep. Hutter to lead women's caucus

The Legislative Women's Caucus elected Rep. Nita Hutter, R-Chalmette, as its new chairman for 2007-08.

Others new caucus officers are Sen. Ann Duplessis, D-New Orleans, Senate vice chair; Rep. Karen St. Germain, D-Pierre Part, House vice chair; Rep. Jane Smith, R-Bossier City, secretary; Rep. Regina Ashford-Barrow, D-Baton Rouge, treasurer; Rep. Cheryl Gray, D-New Orleans, parliamentarian; and Sen. Willie Mount, D-Lake Charles, member-at-large.

There are 25 women who serve in the House and Senate.

Hunter Reed to serve ULL system

Kim Hunter Reed, the governor's deputy chief of staff, is joining the University of Louisiana System at the end of July as executive vice president.

Before joining the governor's staff, Reed had served in higher education as a deputy commissioner of the Louisiana Board of Regents and she had previously worked at Southeastern Louisiana University in Hammond.

"Kim Hunter Reed is a talented, hard-working employee, and I thank her for her years of service under my administration," Gov. Kathleen Blanco said in a prepared statement. "She has been a

valuable member of my team, and she goes to the University of Louisiana System with my highest commendations.”

Ethics law to limit ethics lawyer's job

The state's chief ethics law administrator won't be able to do outside work in the future if Gov. Kathleen Blanco signs off on a proposed law.

The current administrator, Gray Sexton, would have until Aug. 15, 2008, to divest himself of private legal clients. Between now and then, Sexton would have to file personal financial disclosure statements detailing outside work under the legislation.

LA Ethics 1 pushed the legislation, saying it is necessary to reduce any potential conflicts of interest involving the top ethics administrator. Its legislative sponsor was Rep. William Daniel, R-Baton Rouge.

One of Sexton's clients is Lane Grigsby, a Baton Rouge contractor who conducted a political mailer campaign against Daniel in Grigsby's unsuccessful bid for state Senate.