

Dems' reasons for low fund totals personal, political

By CALLIE ENLOW

Diana Maldonado, the Democratic Party candidate for Texas State House District 52 and Round Rock resident, had a \$129,740 balance in her treasury according to her July 15 campaign contribution report. Her opponent, GOP candidate Bryan Daniel of Georgetown, had a \$32,421 balance during the same period.

However, other Williamson County Democratic candidates can only claim a fraction of Ms. Maldonado's fundraising success, which has been due in part to contributions from education political action committees and Annie's List. The three candidates running for county attorney, Precinct 1 and Precinct 3 county commissioners raised just shy of \$6,000 in the same period - total.

Some reasons for the difference are purely political. Ms. Maldonado is unique among other Democratic candidates because the seat she is running for is not currently filled by an incumbent. State Representative Mike Krusee said in November 2007 that he would not seek re-election.

Other reasons are more personal. "If someone comes up and offers me \$5,000, \$10,000, \$15,000, I'm going to want to know who they are," said Jaime McCain Lynn, running for Williamson County Attorney against incumbent Jana Duty. Mr. Lynn, a Cedar Park resident, said he thought \$1,000 per individual was a more reasonable campaign contribution.

His largest individual donors for July's filing period, donating \$300 or less, were people Mr. Lynn said he knew personally, two of them defense attorneys from Austin.

Mr Lynn raised \$1,856 in the filing period between January and July 2008, but spent more than \$8,000 on office supplies, campaign headquarters rent and signs out of his own pocket.

"I don't think it should take that much money to run a county-wide race," said Mr. Lynn who estimated that it costs between \$50,000 and \$60,000 to run a very effective county-wide campaign.

Mike Grimes, a Round Rock civil attorney running for Precinct 1 county commissioner, put an even more stringent requirement on his campaign fundraising: no more than \$250 per donor for the duration of the race.

Almost a quarter of Mr. Grimes' \$3,329 contributions came from individuals affiliated with the law firm Graves, Dougherty, Hearon and Moody, in Austin, Texas. An attorney for the firm, James Hemphill, represents the intervenors in the appeal of their lawsuit against Waste Management. Inc. over the Williamson County landfill contract.

Mr. Hemphill did not donate to Mr. Grimes' campaign, and Mr. Grimes said he knew many of the donors personally from their work as trial lawyers together over the years.

He called John J. Mike McKetta, a managing partner at GDHM and a donor to Mr. Grimes' campaign, a close friend.

"Most of the people I know are lawyers," said Mr. Grimes, who has practiced law in the area since moving to Round Rock in 1971. Mr. Grimes is opposing incumbent Commissioner Lisa Birkman.

Greg Windham, a Georgetown resident running against Republican incumbent Valerie Covey for Precinct 3 county commissioner, collected slightly more than Mr. Grimes during the last filing period, though he also spent more, leaving him with a balance of \$885 in July.

That amount grew considerably in recent months, to what Mr. Windham said was more than \$9,000 though that filing report will not be available until October 6.

"We got that by banging on a lot of doors on SH 29," said Mr. Windham, referring to the state highway running through Williamson county Precincts 2 and where an expansion and bypass route has recently been laid out. Mr. Windham opposes the expansion plan.

Unlike his fellow Williamson County Democratic Party candidates, Mr. Windham said he would not implement a limit on an individual's campaign contribution.

The Democrats still believed that despite their modest campaign contribution reports, they could woo voters. "My biggest expenditure is on time," said Mr. Lynn. Mr. Windham, who claimed to have knocked on 500 doors in Sun City Monday morning, agreed.