

# Cheney on way to help Olson tackle Lampson

■ Vice president is not a stranger in 22nd District

By ALAN BERNSTEIN  
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Build a Republican campaign for Tom DeLay's old congressional seat and Dick Cheney will come.

The vice president is scheduled to visit Houston billionaire Dan Duncan's home in River Oaks today for a private campaign fundraising event for congressional candidate Pete Olson of Sugar Land and the Texas Republican Party.

Olson is running for the 22nd Congressional District seat held by Democrat Nick Lampson of Stafford. Cheney is no stranger to the local political turf.

When DeLay was entangled in campaign ethics charges in late 2005, Cheney was the main attraction at a fund-raising event in Houston for the seasoned Republican lawmaker. After DeLay resigned in 2006, Cheney raised campaign cash here for Republican Shelley Sekula Gibbs in her unsuccessful write-in campaign against Lampson that year.

"It'll be a better Congress if we have more members like our fine candidate, Shelley Sekula Gibbs," Cheney said then, though this year's Republican primary voters disagreed. Olson, a former Senate aide, defeated her in an April runoff for the GOP nomination.

Cheney will make no public appearances on his round trip from Washington; his voyage will be billed to the Olson and state campaigns, says spokeswoman Meghan Mitchell.

Cheney, who has extremely low approval ratings in voter surveys and was criticized in former Bush press secretary Scott McClellan's new book, is more of an asset for Olson as a money magnet than as a campaigner, University of Houston political scientist Richard Murray said.

"When he has a 20 percent approval rating, you don't shop the guy around," Murray said. "But presumably, he has some ability to draw out some of the faithful contributors who have been sitting on their wallets until now."

## A big draw, a big critic

"The vice president is very popular among Republicans, and these are Republican donors that he is talking to," Har-

ris County GOP Chairman Jared Woodfill said.

Lampson's campaign had a different view. The Democrat's fund-raising e-mail to supporters Thursday said, "Cheney was recently identified by (Republican) Scott McClellan as the ringleader of one of the most deceitful propaganda machines in American history and the man most responsible for the damage this administration has done to our country."

Cheney is hosting a string of fund-raising events for congressional candidates, and in some cases the candidates allow reporters access to the event, as Sekula Gibbs did two years ago. Not so with Olson, however.

Cheney campaigned in Mississippi last month for a Republican candidate in a special election, saying voters don't need "another Democrat going to bat for Nancy Pelosi." Olson uses a similar line as he tries to tie Lampson to Pelosi, the House speaker. But the Mississippi Democratic candidate won the election in the conservative district near Memphis.

The national Republican Party considers the 22nd District seat prime territory this year because it is one of the few in Democratic hands after being designed by DeLay to elect a Republican. It covers parts of Harris, Fort Bend, Brazoria and Galveston counties.

## Money, photo, lunch

For the River Oaks event, a \$2,500 donation per couple earns a photo session with Cheney, mention on the event program and two lunch tickets. Donors can be classified as event co-chairs by giving or raising \$14,600.

At the end of March, the last period for which records are available, Olson's campaign was technically in debt, with almost \$128,000 on hand and a debt to the candidate, who provided a personal loan of \$175,000. Lampson had \$1 million in the bank.

Cheney's fund-raising effort is part of the political backing promised to Olson by President Bush, Olson spokeswoman Amy Goldstein said.

"After Pete won the runoff, he got a call from the president," she said. "There's been a huge outpouring of support from the national party. The president offered all the help, the party has offered all the help it can give and it's great to have the vice president."

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