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CAMPAIGN 2008: 22ND CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Ex-Navy pilot Olson concerned over energy

Editor's note: First in a series

By **ALAN BERNSTEIN**
HOUSTON CHRONICLE

For a relatively young candidate who moved to Sugar Land last year, Pete Olson has been around.

He learned his way around the skies over the Persian Gulf, the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean as a pilot in the U.S. Navy. He acclimated himself to the rabbit warrens of the U.S. Capitol as a senior staffer for U.S. Sen. Phil Gramm and then for U.S. Sen. John Cornyn, both Texas Republicans.

Olson, who grew up in the 22nd Congressional District in the Clear Lake area and went to college in Houston, fits the tone adopted by all 10 Republican contenders in the primary race by declaring his belief in "family, faith, freedom and the American dream."

Whether he fits as a true voice for the suburbs on the west, south and east sides of Houston is another question — at least according to some of his opponents.

Many of the nine other candidates cite their political activity and professional work in the district during the decades Olson was away working as a pilot, Pentagon junior staffer and Senate aide.

But Olson obviously doesn't apologize for serving his country away from home. He was born on a military base when his father served in the Army. He said he decided early in his life to serve in the armed forces.

"I wanted to honor the generations who came before me and so selflessly fought the dic-

PETE OLSON



OLSON

■ **Born:** Dec. 9, 1962

■ **Career:** Senate staff member in Washington, U.S. Navy

■ **Education:** Undergraduate degree from Rice University, law degree from University of Texas

■ **Previous runs for elected office:** None

tators, fanatics and murderers of their day," he said.

Olson mentions that he is a National Rifle Association member. His campaign literature features photographs of him in a Navy jet cockpit, in Navy uniform or shaking hands with his former Senate bosses. Now Gramm and Cornyn are supporting Olson's candidacy, helping him raise campaign money from lobbyists and other contributors.

In addition to the contest's standard list of positions — cut taxes, cut the budget, keep illegal immigrants out, stay strong in the fight against terrorism — Olson adds that the nation should strive for energy independence. This should be accomplished, he said, by lifting the oil-drilling ban on some U.S. wilderness areas as well as investing in development of alternative energy sources.

He said he would also work to expand health care choices for small businesses.

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