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NEWS

Karla DuPriest, a Republican who supports redistricting, eyes 2nd District congressional race

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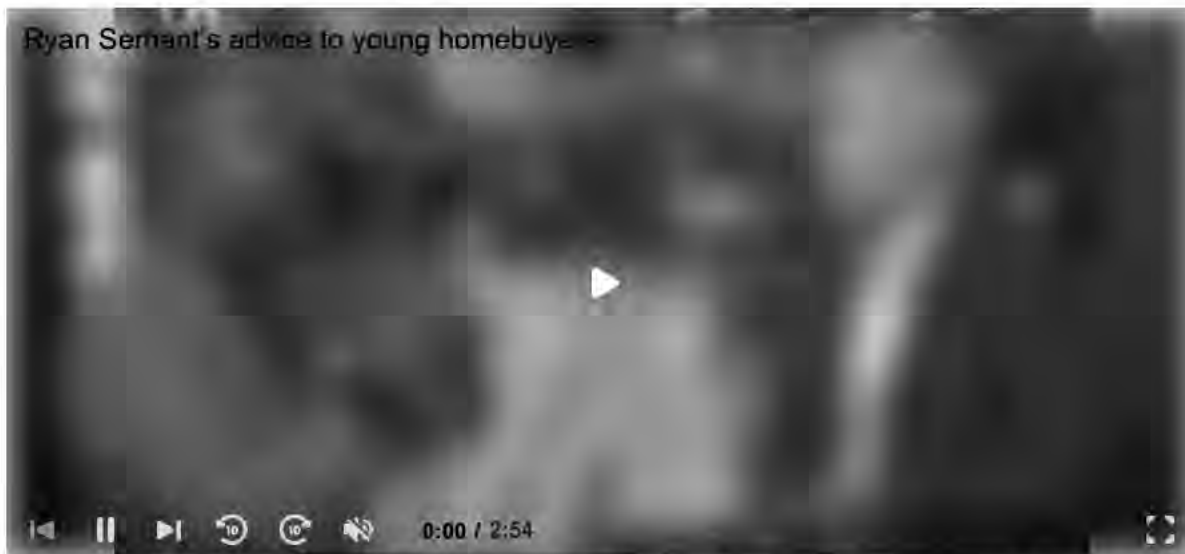
Alabama Senate candidate Karla DuPriest (photo provided by campaign)



By [John Sharp | jsharp@al.com](#)

Karla DuPriest might be a Republican, but she differs from most of the state's GOP in that she didn't mind seeing Alabama's 2nd congressional district redrawn so that it could give Black voters a better opportunity to choose someone who can better represent them.

The only thing is that she believes voters should elect a Republican within the newly-drawn district that leans Democratic.



"It's a good thing that they did redistrict, and the people of that district can elect a person who can reflect their values," said DuPriest, 62, of Mobile, who is one of eight Republicans competing for the party's nomination during the March 5, 2024, primary.

"It's not necessarily someone who looks like them, but it's an advantage to having someone who can sympathize with the challenges of jobs, education, and health care," she said. "We are losing a lot of hospitals. It does have someone who can sympathize, but it's not the only criteria that needs to be met."

She said those values are "not limited to the Democratic party," said that Black voters – like any ethnicity – are likely to "choose with the side" of an issue they support, and not the political party.

DuPriest is one of three Black Republicans running for the seat. The other two are Wallace Gilberry, a former University of Alabama and NFL football player; and Belinda Thomas, a member of the Newton City Council in the Wiregrass.

"I feel that me, being a Republican, is not going to be a detriment," DuPriest said. "People need people who stand for their values and the values are not unique to the Democratic Party, but which are unique for the people in the 2nd congressional district."

DuPriest is making her second run at federal office in the past two years. She finished fifth out of six candidates during the GOP primary for the U.S. Senate seat in 2022, with 5,739 votes or 0.9%. That race was eventually won by current U.S. Senator Katie Britt.

She hopes her background managing a congressional office along and in operating small businesses, will help her stand out in a large field of candidates in what appears to be a wide-open race for the 2nd district seat.

"I grew up in the district, and we live in a critical era that requires a fresh perspective from someone who is loyal to the state of Alabama and loyal to the Republican Party," said DuPriest. "I feel that I am that person."

DuPriest, the owner and founder of Christ & Carla Heavenly Ribs, said she wants to get elected to better support small businesses, improve education in rural areas, and to "fight for disabled veterans."

"We have to think outside the box to help address the homelessness and mental illnesses of our disabled veterans," DuPriest said.

The issue carries significant meaning for the DuPriest family. Her son, James, is a disabled military veteran and she aid she has a passion of supporting his needs.

"I deal with this trauma ... on a daily basis and also with the bureaucracy of the (Veterans Administration) of trying to just get an appointment is not as simple as calling your local physician, but going through a long phone system and them to just tell you it's going to be a month to get them in when they should've been in (to see a physician) yesterday," DuPriest said.

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DuPriest said what makes her background unique is that she's already familiar with the inner workings of Congress, having worked as a district manager in 1999 for the late Kansas Republican Congressman Richard "Dick" Nichols.

She also touted her various credentials as an accountant, insurance adjuster, and for having a medical billing and coding degree.

“I love learning, but when I go to Congress, it won’t be something new to me,” said DuPriest, citing her background working with Nichols. “I know what it takes to set up a staff and to get in there and hitting the ground running on Day 1.”

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