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We Love Our New Angels!

Politics

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THE BATTALION

Thursday, September 20, 2001

Purple Heart may be awarded to Pentagon victims

WASHINGTON (AP) — Democratic Rep. Martin Frost wants civilians who died or were injured in the Pentagon attack awarded the Purple Heart, a medal reserved for military personnel killed or wounded in combat.

"Awarding the Purple Heart to the many civilian employees who perished in the attack on the Pentagon would recognize the essential work civilian workers provide for our national defense and the tremendous sacrifice they made in performing their duties," Frost said in a statement.

A bill introduced by Frost, of Dallas, would allow civilian Department of Defense employees who were victims of the Sept. 11 attack to receive the medal.

Frost said that as of Wednesday, the Department of Defense had listed 64 civilian employees of the Pentagon unaccounted for, including 47 Army civilians, nine Navy civilians, seven employees of the Defense Intelligence Agency and one employee of the Secretary's Office.

In 1973, criteria for awarding the Purple Heart was changed to include people wounded or killed in a terrorist attack. But in 1998, Congress restricted award of the medal to military personnel only. S.J. Maloukis, adjutant of the Department of Texas Military Order of the Purple Heart, was not enthusiastic about Frost's proposal.

"The Purple Heart is awarded for combat wounds from facing an armed enemy of the United States. They should have an award, I'm sure, but it should be something other than the Purple Heart," he said.

The Purple Heart is officially named the Order of the Purple Heart for Military Merit and is considered the oldest military decoration in the world still in use and the first award made available to a common soldier.

Akins drops out of gubernatorial race

AUSTIN (AP) — Democrat Marty Akins dropped his campaign for governor Wednesday to run for state comptroller, all but clearing the way for Laredo businessman Tony Sanchez to challenge Republican Gov. Rick Perry in 2002.

In a released statement, Akins said he dropped out of the governor's race to avoid a "rugged struggle" in the Democratic primary. Houston attorney John WorldPeace is the only other announced Democratic candidate for governor, but the multi-millionaire Sanchez is considered the heavy favorite to win his party's nomination.

Akins said he dropped out to avoid a bitter primary and saw no benefit to voters or the party "to battle one another in a rugged struggle from which there might not emerge a Democratic winner at all come November 2002."

"I believe this is the right time, now, to unify our Texas Democratic Party and for the Democratic candidates to come together as a team," Akins said.

Akins said he called Sanchez on Wednesday to tell him. "Mr. Akins will be a fine comptroller and an asset to the ticket," Sanchez, spokeswoman Michelle Kucera said.

Akins, a lawyer from Marble Falls, is a former All-American quarterback at the University of Texas. He is the first Democrat to announce a campaign to challenge Republican Comptroller Carole Keeton Rylander next year.

The comptroller's race now creates enemies out of former allies.

According to his 1998 application for a Texas Railroad Commission appointment, Akins listed among his political experiences being a Rylander campaign fund raiser and adviser.

Bob Mann, Akins' communications consultant, said Akins liked Rylander personally but "regrets" his previous political alliance.

"He took a look and got belly-up close to the Republican way of

"He took a look and got belly-up close to the Republican way of doing things and said, 'I'm a Democrat.'"

— Bob Mann,
Akins' communications consultant

doing things and said 'I'm a Democrat,'" Mann said.

Rylander has "tremendous support" from Republicans and Democrats and about \$3 million in cash on hand for her campaign, said spokesman Mark Sanders.

"That support is based on her achievements as comptroller. She looks forward to the campaign and looks forward to meeting with the people of Texas about what's she's done in office and what she'll do in the next four years," Sanders said.

Although Akins had about \$2.6 million in campaign funds, many Democratic leaders believe Sanchez is the best chance to beat Perry and, as a high-profile Hispanic on the ticket, to increase turnout in that heavily Democratic voting bloc.

Although he had officially announced his campaign for governor much earlier than Sanchez, Akins was bedeviled by doubts over his class regarding his relationship with former President Lyndon Johnson and whether he exaggerated his relationships with black teammates during his football career.

Austin political consultant Bill Miller said Akins' move indicates a strategy by the Texas Democratic Party, which is currently shut out of statewide offices. The party will want a field of candidates to challenge Republican incumbents in every office next year, Miller said.

"The fact that people are moving around and choosing some open races," suggests coordinated effort by party leadership, he said. "That's the smart thing to do, fill all the available races. Eliminate primary strife."

Texas Democratic Party Chair Molly Beth Maloney said Democrats "are going to have a strong ticket from top to bottom in 2002."

Party spokesman Mike Hall said Akins was not asked to leave the governor's race. "It was Marty's decision," he said.

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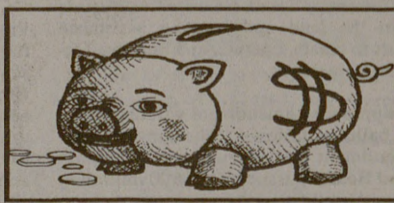
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