

In House District 45 race, local contribution mix appears to favor Starkey

By [Jodie Tillman](#), Times Staff Writer
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The theme comes up again and again as two well-connected Republicans battle for the House District 45 seat:

Who has deeper roots in the community?

Not surprisingly, both Kathryn Starkey and Richard Corcoran raise their hands to that question — and point to their recent campaign contribution reports as evidence of their local ties.

Starkey, who has raised \$67,000 since February, said recently that her consultant had estimated roughly 80 percent of her contributions come from within the district.

"Our allegiances are in different places," said Starkey, noting Corcoran's larger number of Tallahassee-based contributions.

Corcoran, who has raked in nearly \$98,000 since joining the race in April, said he is the one leading the way in local contributions. On the day Starkey's reports came out almost two weeks ago, he said in an interview that though he had not run the numbers, he felt confident in saying this: "I have more local contributions than the other candidates."

So who's right?

Count only those contributions coming from residents and businesses within the House 45 district, and Starkey comes out on top — but not by a whole lot, according to a *St. Petersburg Times* analysis of the reports.

About 17 percent of her total 312 contributions vs. about 14 percent of Corcoran's 333 contributions have come from inside the district, which extends from the Dunedin area, around Tarpon Springs, up through Holiday and Trinity and just north of Ridge Road.

That 17 percent is much lower than the 80 percent figure Starkey cited earlier. But her consultant, April Schiff, said she did not intend for the analysis to be scientific — she'd looked only at the cities and hadn't drilled down to the ZIP code level — and had meant for it to be more of an internal campaign document.

In Starkey's case, the 52 in-district contributions total just over \$12,000, or about 18 percent of the total \$67,000 she has raised. Corcoran's 49 in-district contributions total about \$6,500, or about 7 percent of the total \$97,934.

Define "local" more broadly — say all of Pasco and Pinellas counties — and Starkey takes a much sharper lead in the percentage of local contributions.

Nearly 80 percent of Starkey's contributions vs. 40 percent of Corcoran's came from Pasco and Pinellas counties.

(Corcoran's local contributions may be slightly higher than the analysis indicates: Seven checks came from law enforcement and firefighters whose addresses could not be confirmed, so those contributions were not included in the count.)

In a later interview, Corcoran said he wanted to clarify his initial remarks about leading in local contributions. He said his earlier statement would hold true if the clock doesn't start until May, when he got in the race.

"Since I've been in the race," he said, "I've received more in local dollars."

Though Corcoran was incorrect when he said he had raised more local money than Starkey, his amended statement was accurate: Since launching his campaign in April, he has raised about \$3,000 more in local dollars — local defined as coming from within House District 45 — than Starkey has over that same period.

He has also raised considerably more from Tallahassee organizations. His 80 Tallahassee-based contributions — mostly from lawyers, consultants and political action committees — total \$36,250.

That dwarfs Starkey's Tallahassee take: about \$1,350 from four contributions.

The question of who has the most local support — be it through contributions or endorsements or petition signatures — comes up often in the House 45 race to replace Rep. Tom Anderson, who is being forced out by term limits. (There is a third Republican candidate, as well, Fabian Calvo of Clearwater, who has said he plans to move into the district.)

Starkey's and Corcoran's biographies make the question of local support an even more interesting one.

Starkey moved to the area more than 20 years ago and has made a name for herself as a community volunteer and, more recently, as a Pasco School Board member. She also married into one of the Tampa Bay area's pioneer families.

Corcoran grew up in Pasco, moved away, ran for state office twice, worked in Tallahassee and moved his family back to Pasco earlier this year. He now works as a lawyer for Sheriff Bob White.

"I pretty much know everyone who's contributed to me," Starkey said. "They're local businessmen, local families ... being involved in the community for 20 years, it's pretty apparent that I have a lot of local support."

Meanwhile, state Sen. Mike Fasano, a close friend of Corcoran's, recently sent out an appeal letter on his behalf, asking for \$25 donations.

So far Corcoran says he has pulled in nearly 80 checks as a result of that letter, "and they're all in the district."

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BY THE NUMBERS

Total money raised so far:

Richard Corcoran	\$97,934
Kathryn Starkey	\$67,008

Total number of contributions:

Corcoran	333
Starkey	312

Percent of contributions coming from within House District 45:

Corcoran	14 percent
Starkey	17 percent

Percent of contributions coming from Pasco and Pinellas counties:

Corcoran	40 percent
Starkey	80 percent

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