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## Starkey eyeing run for House

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NEW PORT RICHEY — Kathryn Starkey has spent the past few days telling people she's not long for the Pasco County School Board.

Her diverse interests, from education to growth management, have Starkey eyeing a run for the Florida House District 45 seat in 2010. Incumbent Tom Anderson, a Dunedin Republican, won't be able to run for the seat again because of term limits.

"I think that the things I work on are regional and statewide in nature," said Starkey, 51, a Republican who recently won a second term on the School Board without opposition. "I have been encouraged by many that it probably would be a very good platform for me."

She planned to announce her intentions officially next week, but said she's "99.9 percent certain" that she will run.

If she does, state law requires that she resign from the School Board in order to qualify to appear on the ballot.

After hearing from Starkey, some key Pasco Republican leaders quickly signaled their support for her bid.

"She's an excellent candidate," said state Rep. John Legg of New Port Richey, who serves in neighboring House District 46. "She's well known, she knows the issues."

He cautioned, however, that the race ultimately could boil down to turnout in Pasco vs. Pinellas counties, each of which comprises about half the district.

"It's hard to be known in both counties," said Legg, who ran against Anderson for the District 45 seat in 2002 and lost by about 500 votes.

School Board member Allen Altman, a leading east Pasco Republican, said Starkey could be a strong advocate for schools, the environment and other issues she's worked on for the past 15 or so years at the county level.

"Many of the issues we deal with on the School Board are decided in Tallahassee anyway," Altman said, calling Starkey's possible bid "wonderful."

Knowing the powerful position that the Legislature holds in setting education policy has driven her thought process.

"I love working on the School Board," Starkey said. But as former state Rep. Joe Pickens, now president of St. Johns River Community College, told board members at a recent state convention, "the best thing we could do for the state is to get school board members in Tallahassee."

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