

# THE CALL

Picard to seek Badeau's Senate seat

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BY JOSEPH B. NADEAU

WOONSOCKET — There will be at least one candidate signing up to run for the late Sen. Roger R. Badeau's Dist. 20 seat when a short declaration period begins at the Board of Canvassers office today.

State Rep. Roger A. Picard said Wednesday he will be among those seeking the empty Senate seat in order to better serve the city in the General Assembly.

Picard will take out papers today, and said he also plans to submit them with the required number of signatures in order to appear on the ballot of a March 18 primary, if needed, and the special Senate election on April 22.

The last day to file declarations is Friday, followed by a nomination period running from Feb. 12 to Feb. 19 at the Board of Canvassers in Woonsocket.

Declarations and nominations will also be taken in Cumberland during those times.

"It was a very hard decision to make, especially since it came on the passing of Sen. Badeau, who was a mentor and good friend to me during my time at the Statehouse," said Picard, a representative from Dist. 51 for 16 years.

But with Dist. 20 serving a larger constituency — at 26,000 residents between Woonsocket and Cumberland, it's twice the size of his House district — Picard believes a seat in the Senate would allow him to better serve the city.

The Senate, he noted, also has far fewer members, 38, than the House with 75. Being part of the smaller group would mean he'd have substantially more of an impact in the legislative process.

If elected, Picard said he would be able to tap his experiences working with Badeau and other Senate members on legislation important to the area to help him make the transition to a new role in the upper chamber.

"Even in the House, you still have to work closely with the Senate side to make sure your legislation gets through," Picard said.

If elected, Picard said he would be required to resign his House seat, a move that would leave it unoccupied until regular elections in November.

Under state law, the seat would have had to become vacant before Feb. 1, as Badeau's did, to be filled by a special election.

Picard would also have to run again in November if he did secure the Senate slot in the special April 22 election, but said he is willing make that double effort.

"Running again is a challenge but it is what it is, you just do it," Picard said.

Picard was first elected to the House in 1992. He currently serves as vice chairman of the Corporations Committee, and is also as a member of the Labor Committee. He is a deputy majority leader as well.

A resident of 764 Mendon Road, Picard is a social worker for the Woonsocket School Department. He has a master's degree in social work from Rhode Island College and earned two bachelor's degrees from the University of Rhode Island, with majors in business administration and economics.

He and his wife, Diane, have three daughters, Nicole and Kristen in college and Caitlyn at home.

While Picard was first to announce for Badeau's seat, he may not be alone in the effort for long. Mayor Susan D. Menard said Wednesday she has heard several names bandied about, but does know for certain who might join Picard in a race.

"I do hope we have a senator that comes from Woonsocket," Menard said. "That would be my preference," she added, noting that Cumberland Mayor Daniel J. McKee probably feels the same way about his community.

Linda J. Fontaine, manager of the city Board of Canvassers, said Wednesday that aside from Picard stopping by to get information on the district, she doesn't yet know who will file to run.

Badeau, who died Jan. 25 after a battle with cancer, had served in his district for over 23 years and had not faced a challenge in years, Fontaine said. That leaves a large question mark as to who will replace him.

"I can't even give you a guess," Fontaine said.