



March 18, 2010

9/11 Survivor Enters Competition for Senate Vacancy with Support from Several Key Conservatives

A Granbury Republican who survived the September 2001 attack on the Pentagon despite serious injuries has entered the ring of contenders who are competing for an open state Senate seat in a special election this spring.

Brian Birdwell, who's been a motivational speaker and author since retiring from the military as a lieutenant colonel, announced Thursday night that he plans to be on the ballot when Central Texas voters pick a replacement for Republican **Kip Averitt** in a special contest that Governor **Rick Perry** has set for May 8. Averitt stepped down from the upper chamber on Wednesday - two weeks after winning the GOP primary in a re-election bid that he'd cancelled in January for health reasons.

Birdwell added his name to a list of candidates that so far includes ex-Senate member **David Sibley** of Waco and Darren Yancy, a Burleson businessman who Averitt defeated with 60 percent of the GOP vote on March 2. Birdwell, who'd considered a race against Republican State Rep. **Jim Keffer** two years ago before deciding not to run, launched his bid for the Senate District 22 with encouraging words of support from several high-profile conservative activists including former state GOP Vice-Chairman **David Barton** and Republican National Committee member **Bill Crocker**.

"Brian Birdwell is a genuine, articulate conservative with proven leadership ability and unquestioned integrity," Crocker said. "Central Texas Republicans are fortunate to have the opportunity to make him their next State Senator for Senate District 22."

Birdwell, a decorated Iraq War veteran who chronicled his experience on 9/11 in the book "Refined by Fire: A Family's Triumph of Love and Faith" that he co-wrote with his wife, said Waco activist **Wayne Purselley** had signed on as his campaign treasurer.

Birdwell suffered burns over 60 percent of his body when a hijacked American Airlines jet crashed into the office next to his shortly after two other planes that terrorists had pirated destroyed the World Trade Center in New York.

Birdwell, who's undergone surgery 39 times in the past nine years, said he'd been encouraged by the strong support he's received from conservatives across the 10-county Senate district about his campaign. Birdwell said his background in the military and experience dealing with the Army's budget had prepared him for the work he will undertake as a legislator if elected as Averitt's successor.

"Texas faces great challenges in the next session, on issues ranging from the budget, standing up to an overreaching and out of control federal government, and preserving the conservative values which have made Texas the envy of the nation," Birdwell said.