

Orlando Sentinel

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The *Sentinel* strongly endorses Andy Gardiner in Senate District 9

Andy Gardiner talks of the importance of keeping Florida Senate District 9 in Republican hands. Dan Webster is vacating it because of term limits.

We believe the most important thing for voters to consider in assessing the candidates isn't party but their capacity to benefit the district and region. It just so happens that Mr. Gardiner (is) more primed and better able to do exactly that than (his) respective rival for the Legislature, Democrat Darius Davis.

District 9

It's essential that district residents not find their influence in Tallahassee depleted by Mr. Webster's departure. Mr. Webster routinely managed complex legislative fights on issues spanning taxes and transportation. Many issues critical to the area remain unresolved, however. Mr. Gardiner could help resolve them — and in his constituents' favor.

A former House majority leader, Mr. Gardiner knows the minutia of the Central Florida commuter-rail project and, most important, the strategy needed to get the Legislature to pass it. He calls it the region's No. 1 priority, and he's right.

But Mr. Gardiner can juggle several balls that his district needs to keep aloft. He'd make it harder for governments to change their growth plans, he'd work to check property-insurance rates, and he'd champion more accountability among school districts.

Mr. Gardiner also is one of the Legislature's strongest, and most effective, advocates for disabled children.

His opponent, Mr. Davis, an amiable educator, has a lot to learn. His claim that he's the best-qualified candidate earns an F. He has mixed feelings about commuter rail, no ideas about how to build the Wekiva Parkway, and no approach to managing insurance rates.

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