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Bobby Bright

By Jill Nolin

Bobby Bright likes to tell people that he has three full-time jobs, all of which require overtime: campaigning for Congress, taking care of his family and running the City of Montgomery.

Although traveling to the other 15 counties in the 2nd District has dominated his life since he announced his bid for Congress in February, he says he hasn't let his mayoral duties take a backseat to his current political aspiration.

Sometimes there are days he can slip away from Montgomery, but those are kept to a minimum and his days typically turn into 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. workday.

"I'm not sacrificing there at all and never will," Bright said on a day he left Montgomery at 5 a.m. to be on a Bullock County TV show at 6:30 a.m.

"What I do is I get up early, as I did this morning, and I'll go to bed very, very late tonight to make sure my duties as mayor are concluded, but at the same time, making sure I do what I need to do to get out and meet the people," Bright said.

Bright, who won his third term as mayor last year, is one of three Democrats who want to represent a congressional seat secured by Republicans since Bill Dickinson won in 1964.

But Bright isn't your usual Democrat, and his message often sounds as if it could be coming from a Republican. A self-described social conservative, Bright says he is pro-life, pro-gun and "strong on military."

He begins to sound less like the candidates on the Republican side when he talks about illegal immigration and the War in Iraq.

"(The troops) have done everything we've asked them to. What we've got to do now -- we've got to help them," Bright said Thursday on Talk Back Bullock County, a weekly TV show in Union Springs.

"We've got to come up with a strong, honorable plan to bring our men and ladies home, and we've got to redirect the billions and billions of dollars that that war is costing us here where they are needed," said Bright, who grew up in Ozark.

Bright also believes the Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission, known to most as BRAC, should be limited in its role while the country is still actively at war. Bright dealt with BRAC as mayor of Montgomery, which is home to Maxwell-Gunter Air Force Base.

He has also had his hand in coming up with ideas for keeping Montgomery from being a "sanctuary city" for illegal immigrants. Under his leadership, the City Council passed an ordinance this month that penalized businesses that knowingly employ illegal aliens. The first two violations mean the suspension of a business license, but an employer will be permanently banished from the city after the third violation.

You won't hear him talking about building a wall at the Mexico border.

"I'm kind of simple guy. You're either legal or you're illegal," Bright said. "If you're illegal, you need to get legal ... and we'll help you in whatever way we possibly we can. We'll even help you find a job.

"We're a nation built on immigration, but we're also a nation built on the law," he said.

Bright said he chose to run as a Democrat because the Democratic Party is the majority party in Congress and because it has promised to give him the most freedom to think independently.

Bright believes District 2 is missing out on important resources that are intended to help poor districts, because Republicans view the projects as "pork barrel projects." He said that money is there for that purpose and if the District 2 Congressman doesn't seize the opportunity, someone else will.

"Un-handcuff your congressman and send me up there to Washington," Bright said to the Bullock County TV show viewers.

"I'm asking you to trust me for the next two years and if you're happy with what I've done, keep me there working, and if you're not happy, put me out," he added.

Bright said he hears from his supporters that they do not want to vote for him because they're against him leaving Montgomery. To those individuals, he tells them to look at the congressional seat as a promotion.

"I want to do more good things like I've done in Montgomery," Bright said.

Bright also said the country needs to invest in alternative methods of energy, such as solar, wind and water power, switch grass techniques and bio diesel. Again, he points out that under his leadership the city started a bio diesel plant that produces fuel for city vehicles.

He says some of his other major issues are healthcare and providing better healthcare for veterans, protecting the two military installations here and creating more jobs.
