

Gonzales sitting pretty as District 41's sole contender

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“ (Running unopposed) gives me more of an opportunity to work at building what I've already started ... ”

— Rep. Veronica Gonzales, D-McAllen

State Democratic Caucus.

Raised in San Marcos, the 41-year-old attorney graduated *cum laude* from Southwest Texas State University in 1986 with a bachelor of arts degree in English and Spanish.

After completing her undergraduate studies, she enrolled in the University of Texas School of Law and earned her doctorate of jurisprudence in 1991. She is currently a partner in the law firm Kittleman, Thomas, Ramirez & Gonzales LLP.

With the explosive population growth occurring in her district, two of her top legislative priorities are construction of more higher education facilities and expanding access to health care, she said.

“I want to continue providing support to small

businesses and giving incentives for larger businesses to want to locate in our area,” said Gonzales, who recently joined a manufacturing caucus.

She also serves on the state's Bi-national Alcohol and Substance Abuse Task Force, which is tasked with studying the causes and effects of substance and alcohol abuse on the border and developing legislative solutions to the problems.

“One of the things that we've requested is an attorney general opinion to find out what is the legality of having some restrictions placed on minors from going across the border without an adult,” she said.

Last session, Gonzales authored a bill, later signed

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McALLEN — Seeking reelection in a district created by and for Republicans, state Rep. Veronica Gonzales, D-41, has nothing to fear in the March 7 primary.

“I was excited not to have an opponent,” she said. “They always tell you that there's two ways to run: scared and unopposed. It also just gives me more of an opportunity to work at building what I've already started than having to spend the time and money campaigning.”

First elected to her seat in November 2004, Gonzales represents a district that is contained entirely in Hidalgo County and includes portions of Edinburg,

McAllen and Mission.

Former Republican Party Political Director Royal Masset drew the current District 41 map in 2001 at the request of Hidalgo County Republican Party Chairman Hollis Rutledge.

The seat lost strongly Democratic precincts in south McAllen, Hidalgo and Pharr and gained Republican enclaves in Alton, Palmhurst and North McAllen.

Since the district was redrawn to favor the GOP, though, no Democrat has

faced a challenge from a Republican in a general election. Gonzales bested longtime Democratic incumbent Roberto Gutierrez, a first cousin to Rutledge, in the 2004 primary and was unopposed in the general election.

Gonzales is the first woman elected to represent the district. She sits on the Government Reform, Judiciary and Rules and Resolutions committees and was elected by her colleagues as secretary of the

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into law, that requires cities and counties to dedicate certain Community Development Block Grant money for the installation of street lights in colonias.

“And one of the bills that I'll be working on for this next session is enabling legislation that would allow the cost to be passed on to the consumer, but it also would mean that more areas, more streets, would be covered. And I've talked to the residents, and they're all in favor of it.”

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