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Names the same in New Jersey's Third: Runyan and Adler

November 01, 2012 | By Jonathan Tamari, Inquirer Staff Writer

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The boundaries are new, but South Jersey's Third Congressional District remains home to one of the most intense and expensive House races in the state.

The names, too, are familiar. Republican Jon Runyan is seeking a second term in Congress after a lengthy football career, mostly with the Eagles. He faces Shelley Adler, a former Cherry Hill councilwoman whose late husband, John, a longtime state legislator, represented the district in Congress for a term before losing to Runyan in 2010. He died five months later of complications from a bacterial staph endocarditis infection.

"My husband left a legacy of public service," Adler said. "We believe that public service is about helping people, and there are so many people out there that need help right now."

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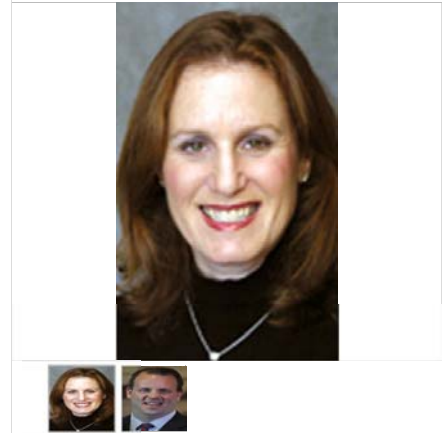
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Running against Runyan, she said, is not personal: "He's just an opponent with a voting record."

Runyan, 38, casts that record as embracing the fiscal discipline needed to repair the economy. In his first term in office, he twice voted for the Republican spending plan proposed by Paul Ryan, the House budget chairman and now the GOP vice presidential nominee. Runyan has voted to repeal the Affordable Care Act and wants a government that cuts spending and regulations, and holds down taxes.

"Number one, it's jobs. When you look at it across the board, whether it's taxes, whether it's health care, whether it's regulation and the uncertainty that's out there ... that's the biggest problem," Runyan said.

Adler, 53, said Runyan's votes have favored the wealthy at the expense of seniors and middle-class families, arguing that the Ryan budget would cut needed programs while reducing taxes for those at the top of the income ladder.

Runyan "has a record now that he needs to be accountable for," Adler said. "The record is not one that represents the interests of the people of the Third District."

The race has been targeted by both national parties, and has attracted heavy spending by conservative groups hoping Republicans can hold on to the House.

Runyan would repeal Obama's health-care overhaul, but keep some popular provisions. "That patient-doctor relationship is seriously in jeopardy," he said.

Adler said the law needs fixing, not repeal. "We don't want to go back to a system where the insurance companies are in control," she said.

Runyan would leave taxes at current levels; Adler would let them rise on incomes of \$1 million and up to help balance the federal budget.

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