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Title: Politicians mull opposing McCarthy in '04 primary
Author: MATT STEARNS
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Page: A4

WASHINGTON - Rep. Karen McCarthy of Kansas City may face a contested Democratic primary next year.

Kansas City Councilman Troy Nash, Jackson County Legislator Dan Tarwater and foreign policy expert Jamie Metz, a Kansas City native who lives in Washington, said they are considering a primary challenge to McCarthy for the 5th District congressional seat.

Nash said he had "had conversations with very significant people. ... They think I'd be viable."

"We're keeping all the options open," said Nash, first elected to the City Council in 1999. "There's an enormous amount of pressure on me to make a decision."

Tarwater said, "I'm looking at it. The time may be right." He said that if he entered the race, he would run as a Democrat.

Metz, a senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations, has worked on Capitol Hill, at the State Department and at the White House. He grew up in Kansas City and graduated from the Barstow School.

Although he has not lived in Kansas City for years and has never run for public office, Metz told the Capitol Hill newspaper Roll Call he might challenge McCarthy.

"I've been approached about running, and I am considering it," Metz, 34, told the newspaper. He did not return phone calls Wednesday.

Kansas City Councilwoman Becky Nace said she had been approached to consider challenging McCarthy, but is not considering a race "at this point."

McCarthy, first elected in 1994, has dealt with personal and political setbacks this year: She took a leave of absence from Congress to be treated for alcohol abuse and lost several staffers since her return.

McCarthy spokesman Matt Nerzig said McCarthy "absolutely is running next year."

McCarthy would seem to be in a strong position in one regard: Second-quarter campaign finance reports show she has more than \$422,000 in the bank - plenty to run a campaign.

McCarthy reported raising about \$18,000 in the second quarter. But more than \$6,700 was from Fenn & King Communications, a political consulting firm. But that contribution was a refund of money McCarthy's campaign committee paid earlier to the firm in what was later discovered to be a violation of House ethics rules, Nerzig said.

In the first quarter, McCarthy raised just \$7,400. By contrast, Rep. Sam Graves of the 6th District northwest Missouri raised more than \$66,000 in the second quarter, while 4th District Rep. Ike Skelton raised more than \$140,000.

- To reach Matt Stearns, call (202) 383-6009 or send e-mail to mstearns@krwashington.com.

Caption:

McCarthy<p></p><p></p>Photo

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Section: NATIONAL

Page: A4

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