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GORDON, THOMPSON TAKE LOW-KEY APPROACH TO STATEWIDE RACE

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Tennessee's U.S. Senate race pits Democratic challenger Houston Gordon against Republican Sen. Fred Thompson, elected in 1994 to serve the remaining two years of Vice President Gore's Senate term.

The job pays an annual salary of \$133,600.

Gordon, 50, is a Covington lawyer, Army veteran and Democratic activist seeking his first public elective office. He has emphasized traditional Democratic themes and criticized Thompson's voting record as being contrary to the best interests of Tennesseans, particularly the elderly, students and middle-income families.

Thompson, 54, is a Nashville lawyer, motion picture actor and longtime Tennessee Republican figure serving in his first elective office. He picked up his 1996 campaign where he left off two years ago when he drubbed Democratic congressman Jim Cooper to win the seat, building a campaign theme around the premise that he has voted in Washington as he promised he would - even if all the issues he sought didn't win congressional approval. He failed to sway his colleagues to pass term limits and campaign finance reform, for example. Although it is the only statewide election on Tuesday's ballot other than the presidential vote, the Gordon-Thompson race has been a relatively low-key affair. The two met in debate once, three weeks ago.

The campaign has largely focused on economic issues, with each candidate **basically** supporting policies advocated by their respective parties.

Gordon criticized Thompson for supporting a Republican balanced budget plan that Gordon said would have slashed the prospective increase in spending on Medicare and other programs by \$278 billion over the next six years and channeled \$245 billion of the savings into tax cuts, nearly half of which would have gone to people making more than \$100,000 a year. He **also** charged that seniors would have faced higher deductibles and premiums on Medicare as a result of the GOP program.

But Thompson countered with arguments that while wealthy taxpayers would naturally get bigger dollar savings on the tax cuts, middle-income families would have gotten a larger percentage reduction on their federal tax bills.

The senator supports GOP presidential nominee Bob Dole's 15 percent across-the-board tax cut plan but says the revenue resulting from economic growth won't make up the revenue loss and more spending cuts would be needed to avoid enlarging the deficit.

Gordon said middle-class taxpayers need a tax cut but opposes the Dole plan because it would channel the largest savings to the wealthy and its proposed spending cuts would abolish the huge Oak Ridge National Laboratory.

Attempting to counter Gordon's populist themes, Thompson cited Gordon's votes as a member of the University of Tennessee Board of Trustees to raise student fees and tuition for five years in a row.

Both men oppose President Clinton's proposal for more federal regulation of tobacco.

Both **also are basically pro-choice** on abortion although Thompson has voted to bar federal funding of abortions. Both candidates said they would have voted to override Clinton's veto of a bill this year that would have banned a controversial partial-birth abortion procedure.

Gordon graduated from the University of Tennessee at Martin and the UT law school. After four years in the Army's Judge Advocate General Corps, he was a part-time assistant district attorney in Tipton County, where he maintains a

successful law practice in Covington. He is married and has three teenage children.

Thompson is a graduate of the University of Memphis and Vanderbilt University law school and served as an assistant U.S. attorney in Nashville. He became active in Republican politics as a protege of former senator Howard Baker, who appointed him as the Republican legal counsel to the Senate Watergate Committee in the early 1970s. After building a lawyer-lobbying career in Nashville and Washington, he acted in 18 motion pictures, starting with a small role in which he played himself in the movie Marie in the mid-1980s.

Five independent candidates **also are** on the ballot for the Senate seat: Bruce Gold, John Jay Hooker, Phillip L. Kienlen, Greg Samples and Robert O. Watson.

Caption: Houston Gordon

CAPTION: Fred Thompson

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