

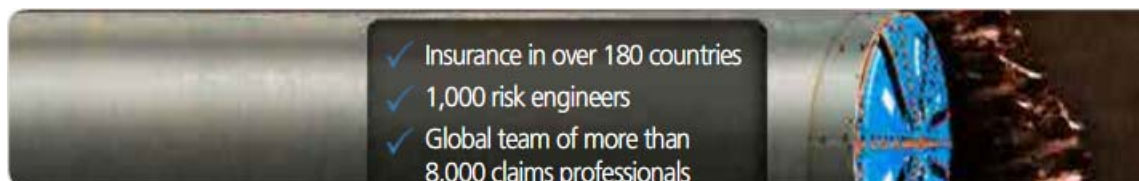


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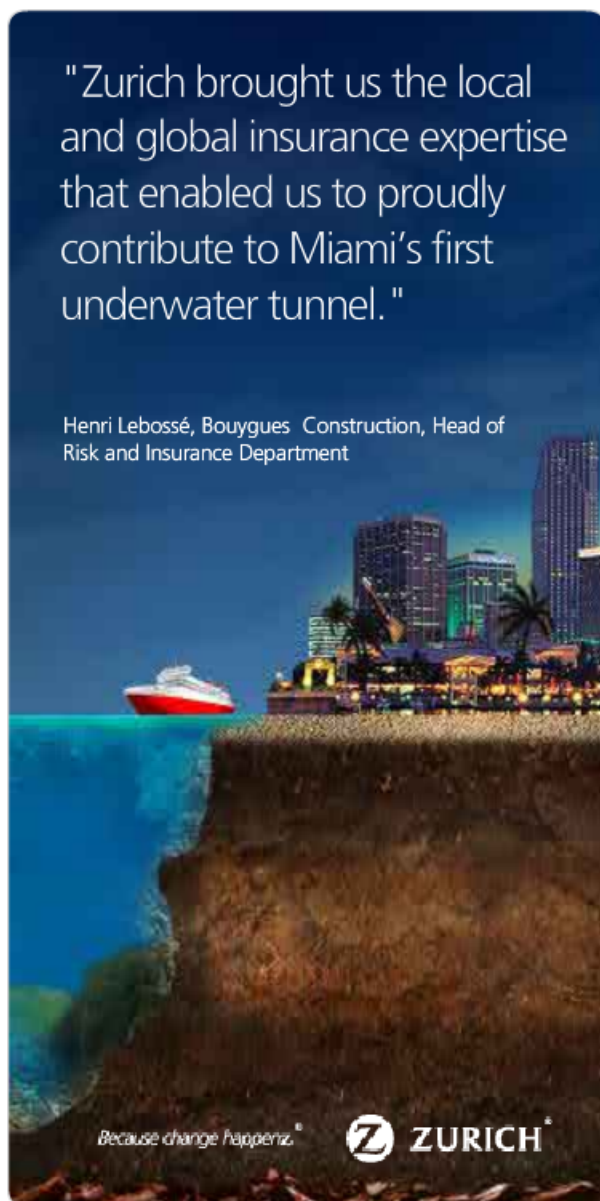


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Race revs up to fill vaca York House seat

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By Neale Gulley

BUFFALO, New York | Sat Mar 26, 2011 10:29am EDT

(Reuters) - The race for western New York's Congressional seat, left vacant by Rep Lee's abrupt resignation after shirtless him surfaced online, likely won't include mention of that scandal.

That's largely because both major party candidates are distanced from the dirt, political analysts say.

Local Republican leaders selected state Assemblywoman within two weeks of Lee's resignation on February 9, while the Democratic Party last week picked Erie County Clerk Kathleen Hochul.



"Two women as major party candidates puts even more distance from the scandal," said James Campbell, chairman of the political science department at the University of Buffalo.

Instead, the candidates are campaigning primarily on jobs in the once industry-rich region.

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Five candidates in all are running to fill Lee's term, which will be held May 24.

Lee, who had just begun his second term, resigned his office after a photograph -- shirtless, flexing before a mirror -- turned up on his website. E-mails from Lee were published as well in which his father appeared to be soliciting the attentions of a woman on craigslist.com.

But those developments did not scar the local party, causing such a personal scandal. It's hard to assign any party to

Corwin, a wealthy executive who took state office in 2006 and clout to win in the district, which tilts Republican, Corwin.

Since World War II only two Democrats have represented the district, which encompasses a large rural area along with parts of Buffalo. According to the state Board of Elections, there are roughly 174,000 Republican voters in the district.

"The question is whether national Democratic money will be said. "If not, I think her prospects are pretty poor."

But Hochul spokesman Fabien Levy noted the Democrats have 80 percent of the vote.

Her campaign is largely grass-roots and will rely on convincing voters by getting both national help and using her own money as

"She thinks she can buy the seat," Levy said. "We on the ground and talking with voters will do the trick."

Of the three other candidates, industrialist Jack Davis has the seat. He is well-funded and has name recognition, Cam

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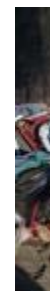
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