

Briggs: New 11th District is GOP turf

BY GREG KOWALSKI
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Joe Knollenberg is off to Washington, D.C.

Walter Briggs isn't sure what he will do next but said it's unlikely he will try again to seek office in the 11th U.S. Congressional District.

Knollenberg, a Republican, easily defeated Briggs, a Democrat, in the race to replace retiring U.S. Rep. William Broomfield.

The vote tally was about 2-to-1: Knollenberg garnered 30,584 votes to Briggs' 15,556 count.

The 11th District stretches from Highland Township in the

northwest to Birmingham and south to Redford then west to South Lyon.

"I'm not sure a Democratic candidate can win in this district," Briggs said Thursday.

"We did the best campaign we could. We took a good shot. This was clearly one of the best races we could win."

He said that if the Democrats could not win in the district this year — considering the victory by Democrat Bill Clinton for the presidency — it's likely the district will stay firmly Republican.

This was Briggs' second attempt to win a U.S. House seat.

Two years ago he faced incumbent William Broomfield and lost. But this year the district was restructured and included areas with more Democratic voters in Livonia and Redford.

"It (the loss) was much more disappointing this time," Briggs said.

Briggs, 36, did not say he was dropping out of politics.

"For now, I want to spend more time with my family. And I need to go back to my work," he said. Briggs is an accountant with Blue Cross/Blue Shield of Michigan but took a leave of absence when he went on the campaign trail.

Briggs wished Knollenberg well as he goes to Washington. "I hope Joe does a good job," he said.

Knollenberg said, "I'm still catching my breath." At age 58 he said his life has taken a dramatic turn now that he is going to Washington.

"It's sobering," he said. "We're going one step at a time." He said he will visit Washington before he takes office to find living quarters and become more familiar with the city and Congress.

Knollenberg is no novice to the Washington scene. He has man-

aged several campaigns, including some for Broomfield, who endorsed him for the post.

Knollenberg attributed his win to "staying the course" of his campaign. "We worked together well," he said of his volunteer staff and advisers. Knollenberg attributed his win to relating to the voters through door-to-door contacts and effective radio ads as well as the strong support of his nearly 1,000-member volunteer support staff.

"That tells me that people out there are a little mixed about what they want to see," said Knollenberg.

But he did agree with Perot's message that people want to see "an end of the gridlock in Congress and solve the problems."

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