

Knollenberg retains House seat

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U.S. HOUSE

"It was one of the most interesting experiences I ever had in my life," Morris Frumin said of his unsuccessful bid to unseat incumbent Joe Knollenberg in the 11th U.S. House race Tuesday.

Frumin, a political newcomer and a Democrat in a largely Republican district, faced an uphill battle that he said often was frustrating. "I was never able to engage Mr. Knollenberg on the issues," Frumin said.

A retired doctor and resident of Bingham Farms, Frumin ran an active campaign, visiting schools and speaking at events. But in the final tally he lost to Knollenberg by 134,401 to 79,267, or by a margin of 61.1 percent to 36.0 percent.

"It leaves me with a sense of disappointment in the political process," said Frumin. "There is a lack of communication of ideas," he said. He wanted to discuss issues such as campaign reforms and health care. But the campaign procedure did not allow him to bring up ideas, he said. Instead, the campaign revolved around sound bites.

On election night, Knollenberg watched the tallies come in at his campaign party at the Radisson Hotel in Farmington Hills.

His focus was on the national results, just as much of his campaign was aimed not at promoting himself but boosting the entire Republican party.

"I felt that we'd have the numbers we had last time," Knollenberg said. "We had something like 68 percent last time." Knollenberg was a strong favorite in Bloomfield Township, his home community where he easily outdistanced Frumin by a margin on 17,962 to 6,021 votes. He also handily won in Birmingham, with a tally of 7,638 votes to Frumin's 3,263 and in Bloomfield Hills where he polled 1,794 votes to Frumin's 472 votes.

This will be Knollenberg's third term in the U.S. House. He replaced long-time Congressman William Broomfield, who retired in 1992. The 11th House district stretches from Highland to Redford and from South Lyon to Bloomfield Township.

Knollenberg based his campaign on attacking President Bill Clinton and defending the Republican-led Congress, which he said had accomplished much of what the Democrats tried to take credit for.



STAFF PHOTO BY SHARON LAMBERT

Another winner: U.S. Rep. Joe Knollenberg (right) talks over his U.S. House victory with wife Sandy, Craig Piery (left) and Frank Maisano at the Farmington Hills Radisson Tuesday evening.

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1992, 76 percent voted in Farmington.

Although the heavy turnout delayed results, there were no major problems.

A miscount in Troy resulted in a premature victory for Democrat Steve Kaplan in the Oakland County Prosecutor race.

The original figures had Kaplan defeated Republican Dave Goryecia 232,193-221,423. But the corrected total put Goryecia in the winner's circle, 239,423-232,193.

In Farmington Hills, Goryecia was an 18,189-17,125 winner (51.46-48.45 per-

cent), and in Farmington, the attorney who unseated Prosecutor Dick Thompson in the GOP primary, won 2,862-2,143, a 57-43 percent difference.

Republicans also won at the county and local level for county executive, sheriff, clerk, treasurer and drain commissioners. And local representatives Don Wolf of the 19th District, and David Moffitt of the 18th, who had no opposition, were GOP winners.

Although local Democrats saw their candidates go down to defeat in county and local races, they had a lot to cheer

about in state and national races.

President Bill Clinton, who won by a wide margin nationally, came close in this strongly Republican area.

Clinton lost in Farmington to Bob Dale, 2,693-2,258, a 59-42 percent margin. Ross Perot received 320 votes (6 percent).

In Farmington Hills, the former Kansas senator narrowly defeated the president, 17,466-17,370, a 46.49-46.24 percent margin. Perot received 2,197 votes (6.85 percent).

Senator Carl Levin was an over-

whelming winner statewide. Local voters also chose the Democrat.

In Farmington Hills, Levin defeated Republican Ronne Romney, 20,370-16,160, a 54.8-43.5 percent difference. In Farmington, Levin won 2,705-2,502, a 51-47 percent margin.

Democrats watching local and national results at the Botsford Inn Tuesday night let out a collective cheer at 9 p.m. when ABC News projected Clinton's win.

"I think Clinton won on the economy and on gut family issues, like family

leave," said a buoyant Aldo Vagnozzi, Farmington Hills mayor. "I think the gender gap was something they (Republicans) did not appreciate."

Republican Congressman Joe Knollenberg, who easily won reelection to a third term, saw it a little differently.

"It looks like the Congress will remain in Republican hands," he said. "That will keep the pressure on the president on ethics issues, Medicaid and a balanced budget."

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ter than the (Democratic) base," Dibert said. "I talked to a lot of Republicans who were not interested in Andrew's extreme views."



Steve Dibert

Rep. Jan Dolan, the retiring 37th District state representative, had won her 1992 race by a 72-28 percent margin.

However, Dolan was running as a popular incumbent who drew support from many Democrats.

Rackowski, who had narrowly lost to Dolan in the 1994 GOP primary, had won a tough primary against three well-organized opponents.

For Dibert, the night included an added unwanted distraction.

While going to his truck outside of the Botsford Inn on Grand River just off Eight Mile,

Dibert saw two men robbing a waitress of her purse and yelled at them. One of the men then showed a pistol and threatened Dibert.

Dibert said he chased the two who fled on foot with the purse. No one was injured.

"I've been talking with the police for the last hour," he said.

Dibert said he expects to remain active in local politics and is encouraged by his showing. But he had higher hopes.

"I thought we could win, but I knew it would be tough," he said.

Tuesdays results were delayed by a heavy turnout, leaving Rackowski supporters waiting while anticipating the win.

"He's supposed to win," said Rackowski's proud father, Bogdan. "We need a change in government."

Bogdan Rackowski, who emigrated from Poland, said his son had taken to heart his advice concerning his campaign.

"Andrew worked hard," he said. "He deserved to win."

The young candidate was generous to his supporters and campaign workers, telling them at

about 9:30 p.m. that exit polling showed him getting a voting percentage "in the high 50s or low 60s."

Ben Marks, chairman of the Farmington Area Republicans and former Farmington Hills mayor, said he thought the new representative would do well in Lansing.

"He knows what he's doing and I think he'll get things done for the district," Marks said.

Although there were several write-in votes for Cathy Webb, who had narrowly lost to Rackowski in the August primary, they were not a factor.

There were 49 write-ins in Farmington and 276 in Farmington Hills. Along with Webb, who received votes in every Farmington Hills precinct, the usual cast of characters, including Donald Duck, received token support. Elvis Presley did not receive any write-ins in the district.

In Farmington, Rackowski won 3,057-1,911, a 61-38 percent margin over Dibert with about 1 percent write-ins. In Farmington Hills, the vote was 20,146-14,595 for Rackowski, a 57.5-41.7 margin with less than 1 percent write-ins.

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"I think that (name recognition) was a part of it, and to be modest, I think I've been a good commissioner. There was a lot of vote splitting and I get a lot of Democrat support as well."

Republican candidates did well across the board in Farmington and Farmington Hills, Wolf said.

Lopez, 26, a law student at Wayne State University, put a positive spin on his second unsuccessful attempt to become a county commissioner.

"I think there are some victories you can take out of defeat," Lopez said. "The best thing I got out of it is that there are a lot more people now who know what a county commissioner does and some of the things that can be changed."

"I think people I spoke with had no idea what a county commissioner does. At least now they have a better idea."

Now that he knows the district better, Lopez is not sure he'll run again for a county seat.

"The way the district is the demographics are going to have to change before I look at it as a serious option," Lopez said. "It's just so clear cut Republican."

Wolf agreed: "Locally, the Republican Party is very strong."



STAFF PHOTO BY SHARON LAMBERT

Happy winner: Commissioner Donn Wolf (right) has a big smile for Kim Jaske (center), his wife Melody and their daughter Abby.

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