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Influx adds up to Adler support

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By BRIDGET SMITH
Courier-Post Staff

A strong showing in both Burlington and Camden counties propelled state Sen. John Adler's close victory over Medford Mayor Chris Myers in the race for New Jersey's 3rd Congressional District seat, unofficial election results show.

Adler, a Democrat, edged out Republican Myers by about 10,000 votes, giving him a roughly 52 percent to 48 percent edge.

Myers carried heavily Republican Ocean County with about 71,300 votes to Adler's 56,100. However, Adler carried both Burlington County -- 79,846 to 63,497 -- and Camden County -- 20,077 to 11,332. Cherry Hill, Adler's hometown, is the only Camden County community in the 3rd District.

The district has always been considered a Republican stronghold. Adler's election, in a district that Republican Rep. Jim Saxton won with 56 percent of the vote in 2006, was surprising, said Ingrid Reed, a political analyst with the Rutgers Eagleton Institute of Politics.

An influx of more than 6,700 new voters in Burlington County as well as a huge increase in Democratic registrations in the county also may have shifted the race in Adler's favor.

In 2007, Burlington County was almost evenly split between Democrats and Republicans at about 51,000 each, with unaffiliated voters outnumbering the two parties combined.

That changed this year, with many unaffiliated voters registering as Democrats to vote in the June primary, pushing Democrat voter registration to more than 91,000, compared to Republican registration of about 65,000.

An especially contentious GOP primary also likely hurt Myers, Reed said.

"Adler had a long time to have the field to himself. It's tough to get known in a congressional race, but Adler had a chance to do that and he had more resources as well," she said, pointing to a more than \$1 million fundraising lead for the Democrat.

"What happened is that Adler activated the Democrats and gave them a reason to vote for him," she added.

Adler said the victory "tells me that I have a real obligation to work for Republicans, Democrats, Independents and cynics."

Adler said his first order of businesses in January will be to become "a voice of common sense for middle class families and for small businesses."

"The people in my area have asked me to go to Washington to try to address their financial anxieties and meet needs that Congress and the current president have failed to deliver on," he said.

He vowed to carry over the philosophy that governed his actions in Trenton to Washington.

"Solving problems means listening to Republicans and listening to Democrats, not listening to parties but listening to people," he said. "I don't see much of that going on in Washington."

Adler's victory and that of state Sen. Leonard Lance, R-Hunterdon, in Hunterdon and Somerset County's hotly contested 7th District means political party officials from their districts will soon begin the process of selecting successors.

Both Adler and Lance intend to serve in the state Legislature until they are sworn into Congress in January, aides said. Within 35 days of their resignation, committees made up of county committee members of their parties will have to choose a temporary successor until a special election is held next November.

Since there are two years left on both their Senate terms, June primaries will be held to determine which candidates will run in November's special election.

Adler declined to speculate or comment on a potential successor.

Camden County Democratic Committee co-chairman Donald Norcross said Wednesday no candidates are being discussed as of yet to fill the seat.

"We'll deal with other issues later on," Norcross said.

Assemblyman Louis Greenwald, D-Camden, chairman of the Assembly Budget Committee, said he enjoys his role in the Assembly and does not plan to seek Adler's seat.

Assemblywoman Pamela Lampitt, D-Camden, said she would be looking into the possibility of seeking higher office.

"I haven't really paused to think about it, but now that today is today, maybe I'll spend a little time to think about what I want to do," Lampitt said.

Gannett New Jersey reporter Michael Rispoli contributed to this report. Reach Bridget Smith at (856) 486-2473 or brksmith@camden.gannett.com

Additional Facts

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From

3rd District 508 of 508 districts counted CONGRESS (vote for 1) DEMOCRAT John Adler 156,372 REPUBLICAN Chris Myers 146,366
