

Schakowsky wins re-election

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Facing two little-known candidates in a historically Democratic congressional district, U.S. Rep. Jan Schakowsky, D-9th, said Tuesday that she felt great about apparently winning her third term by a commanding margin.

With 620 of 631 precincts reporting Tuesday, Schakowsky won with 115,669 votes, or 70 percent, over Republican candidate Nicholas Duric and Libertarian candidate Stephanie Sailor. Duric garnered 44,692 votes, or 27 percent, while Sailor received 4,779 votes, or 3 percent. During a brief stop at the Democratic Party of Evanston's election party headquarters earlier Tuesday evening, Schakowsky received word that Duric had conceded the race shortly before 7:45 p.m.

Reached Wednesday morning, Duric said he did not concede until about 10 p.m. when most of the votes were in. He hadn't yet had a chance to talk to Schakowsky, but planned to do so Wednesday, he said.

Schakowsky said she was happy to hear Democratic gubernatorial candidate Rod Blagojevich had been declared the winner of his race barely one minute after polls closed.

"My joy is that my candidate from Day One, Rod Blagojevich, is winning and that for the first time in a generation we have a Democratic governor," she said Tuesday night.

But Schakowsky worried about national Democratic races, particularly in the U.S. Senate, fearing "that if Republicans take the Senate, in a matter of days we'll see confirmation of judges with very right-wing, conservative ideologies, who will be making decisions for a generation."

Schakowsky was pointedly unhappy with what she described as the inability of her own party to carry the ideological fight to the national GOP.

Disappointments

"I think, given the failure of the Republican leadership and the Bush administration to manage the economy, the almost unbelievable downturn, changing a surplus to a deficit, \$5.3 trillion lost in the stock market, peoples' retirement security shattered ... it is remarkable that Democrats have been unsuccessful in having a winning edge on the economy."

She said she will return to Washington, D.C., to "sharpen the edge" of the Democratic message that there is a real difference between that party and the Republican party.

"I plan to take my inspiration from my dear friend (the late Minnesota Sen.) Paul Wellstone: organize, organize, organize."

Schakowsky said voters seemed to have turned out in higher-than-expected numbers, but she wasn't certain why.

"In Park Ridge it was high because there was a referendum about a new library. There were various referenda on (local ballots), there was the Niles Township (School District) 219 referendum. Then again in Northbrook there was a tremendous turnout, and no referendum," she said.

"What it is, I hope, is that Illinois is solidly Democratic."

Despite anecdotes about a high turnout, figures may not ultimately bear them out. The district itself has a relatively low number of registered voters of roughly 650,000 constituents. Only about 330,000 could vote Tuesday, and only 163,691 of them appeared to have hit the voting booth. That translates to just under 50 percent of registered voters.