

# Fant's lead over Renner now at four votes in race that will go to recount Friday

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candidate Jay Fant

In an election where every vote really does count, Jay Fant has a 4-vote lead in the latest unofficial tally of results for his race with Paul Renner in Florida House District 15.

The freshest update on the Duval County Supervisor of Election's site shows Fant received 5,961 votes and Renner reeled in 5,957 votes in a tense contest between two political newcomers seeking to replace Daniel Davis in the House seat for Jacksonville's Westside.

The cliffhanger contest will require a recount to determine the winner. Duval County Supervisor of Elections Jerry Holland said the recount tentatively is set to start at 10 a.m. Friday.

"Believe me, on that close a race, a recount can vary by a couple of votes," Holland said Wednesday. "So a recount is very important for them on the final decision of that race."

He estimated it would cost up to \$100,000 to conduct the recount for District 15 and also a close School Board contest. The cost of the recount involves pay for temporary employees and overtime expenses, including on election night when workers put in long hours to tally absentee ballots in the Fant-Renner contest.

Holland said \$100,000 is the high end of the cost and he hopes to get "way under that because of our technology advances."

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He said elections officials will backtrack every step of the election process to essentially “reconstruct the election” and ensure all valid votes get counted.

“We’re not looking at this being a fast process,” Holland said. “We’re looking at this being an accurate process.”

In addition to the Fant-Renner race, a recount also is slated for the Duval County School Board District 2 race.

Sam Hall leads Theresa Graham by a mere three votes for second place in that election. Either Hall or Graham will move on to face Scott Shine, the leading vote-getter, in a November runoff contest.

Florida election law automatically requires a machine recount if the difference in votes is less than 0.5 percent. Moreover, if the margin is less than 0.25 percent, then in addition to a machine recount, election officials also will eyeball all ballots that did not show any vote being cast in that race being recounted.

It’s not quite a replay of the “hanging chads” that became infamous in the 2000 presidential election between George W. Bush and Al Gore. But it will require the visual examination of ballots to determine if a voter marked the ballot for a particular candidate in a way that the machine count didn’t register.

For instance, if a voter circled a candidate’s name rather than filling in the oval-shaped bubble next to the name, the election canvassing board could determine that vote should go to the candidate.

Holland, City Councilman Doyle Carter, and Duval County Judge Ron Higbee comprise the canvassing board.

Holland said between the House race and the School Board race, there could be as many as 1,000 ballots that will undergo visual review by the canvassing board.

Before moving to the recount, Holland’s office must certify the unofficial results, which would be done on Thursday. Holland said state law sets a 5 p.m. Thursday deadline for voters who cast provisional ballots to provide documentation that shows they were entitled to vote.

Provisional ballots are given to voters who do not bring required identification to the polls, or when

a voter's name does not appear on the list of registered voters where the ballot is cast.

Holland said countywide, about 315 provisional ballots were cast. He did not immediately have a breakdown for the number in House District 15.

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