

Primary decides nearly half of legislative seats



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News Service of Florida

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TALLAHASSEE — The winners of almost half of the 120 Florida House seats have already been decided — or are all but decided.

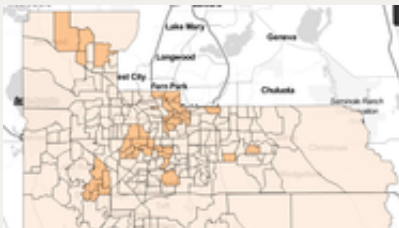
After Tuesday's primary elections, 46 seats have been won, either by candidates running unopposed or by candidates who emerged from the primaries without opposition in the November general election. Meanwhile, another 13 candidates will face only write-in opponents in November, virtually assuring election.

Those candidates include Rep. Doug Broxson, R-Midway, in District 3; Rep. Alan Williams, D-**Tallahassee**, in District 8; Rep. Elizabeth Porter, R-Lake City, in District 10; Rep. Charles McBurney, R-**Jacksonville**, in District 16; Rep. Bruce Antone, D-Orlando, in District 46; Tampa Democrat Ed Narain in District 61; Venice Republican Julio Gonzalez in District 74; Rep. Dane Eagle, R-**Cape Coral**, in District 77; Rep. Heather Fitzenhagen, R-Fort Myers, in District 78; Rep. Bobby Powell, D-**West Palm Beach**, in District 88; Rep. Hazelle Rogers, D-Lauderdale Lakes, in District 95; and Pompano Beach Democrat Kristin Jacobs in District 96.

Also facing only a write-in candidate in November will be the winner of the too-close-to-call House District 15 primary between Jacksonville **Republicans** Jay Fant and Paul Renner.

The **Florida Senate**, meanwhile, likely will see little turnover in the November elections. Half of the 40 Senate seats were up for election this year. Eight incumbents were unopposed, and Senate Majority Leader **Lizbeth Benacquisto**, R-Fort Myers, assured herself of another term by winning a primary in Southwest Florida's District 30.

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Also, three incumbents, Rockledge Republican **Thad Altman**, Brandon Republican **Tom Lee** and **Miami Gardens** Democrat Oscar Braynon, are almost guaranteed of winning another term because they face write-in candidates in November. Of the remaining eight seats, only five incumbents --- St. Augustine Republican **John Thrasher**, **St. Petersburg** Republican Jeff Brandes, Stuart Republican **Joe Negrón**, Orlando Democrat Geraldine Thompson and Delray Beach Democrat **Maria Sachs** --- have major-party opposition.

Sachs is expected to face the toughest battle as she tries to fend off a challenge from former Sen. **Ellyn Bogdanoff**, R-**Fort Lauderdale**, in Southeast Florida's Senate District 34. Meanwhile, **Altamonte**

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Springs Republican **David Simmons** and Orlando Democrat Darren Soto will face opponents without party affiliation, while Clearwater Republican **Jack Latvala** will be challenged by a Libertarian.

Incumbent members of **Congress** and the Legislature won 28 of 29 primary races, with only first-term state Rep. Ricardo Rangel, D-**Kissimmee**, losing his seat. The margins of victory also show the power of incumbents, with 25 of the 28 receiving 60 percent or more of the votes in their contests.

As another indication, all eight of the congressional incumbents who faced primary challenges received at least 70 percent of the votes. Rangel received slightly more than 48 percent as he lost to Kissimmee Democrat John Cortes in Osceola County's House District 43.

The race had drawn little attention, and Cortes raised only \$6,865 before toppling Rangel, who raised \$90,325, according to reports on the state Division of Elections website.