

STATE TREASURER

Murante wins office in primary

DON WALTON
Lincoln Journal Star

Sen. John Murante of Gretna defeated 28-year-old political newcomer Taylor Royal of Omaha on Tuesday in a Republican primary match that will move the victor into the office of state treasurer next January.

The GOP contest attracted unusual attention for a so-called “down ballot” state office because the nominee has a clear path to election in November with no Democratic opponent standing in the way.

The battle between Murante, a two-term state senator, and Royal, who made a bid for mayor of Omaha in 2017, brought high-profile Republican leaders into the fray.

While Murante benefited from support voiced by Gov. Pete Ricketts and a number of other high-profile Republican state leaders who joined the governor in a flood of 30-second TV ads, Royal was endorsed by Omaha Mayor Jean Stothert, who defeated him a year ago.

With Murante halfway through his second and final term as a state senator, his election as treasurer will open up the 49th District seat and give Ricketts an opportunity to appoint a senator to complete the last two years of the legislative term.

A reliable conservative voice and vote in the Legislature, Murante has been chairman of its Government, Military and Veterans Affairs Committee, placing him in position to lead the way in proposing election reforms.

Royal, an Omaha financial adviser, ran third in last year’s Omaha mayor’s race and then vigorously endorsed Stothert in her general election showdown with Heath Mello. The mayor, in turn, has described Royal as “a rising star in the Republican Party.”

His experience as a financial adviser at Northwestern Mutual, a financial services and wealth management firm in Omaha, has prepared him to be “an effective steward of taxpayer resources,” Royal argued.

State Treasurer Don Stenberg will be term-limited out of office at the end of the year after serving two four-year terms.

Turnout low as expected

JOURNAL STAR

Predictions of low voter turnout were mostly accurate across Nebraska on Tuesday night in a primary election with few competitive races.

In Lancaster County, Election Commissioner Dave Shively correctly predicted 25 percent of voters would cast ballots.

The 46,557 votes cast Tuesday signal a midterm election drop. More than 52,000 votes were cast in 2014. About 71,000 voters cast ballots in 2010, when voters considered approving Pinnacle Bank Arena, and 61,000 voters went to the polls in 2006.

In those years, voter turnout was 28.8 percent, 40 percent, and 35.5 percent, respectively.

Statewide, Nebraska Secretary of State John Gale predicted turnout would top out at 28 percent, which is on par with official turnout for the 2014 primary, the last midterm election year.

Despite a few hiccups, such as construction near one polling place that confused some voters, no major problems were reported in Lancaster County, Shively said.

There were also some complaints about campaign signs placed within 200 feet of polling locations in Lancaster County. Shively said poll workers were instructed to remove signs unless they were on private property.



ERIC GREGORY, JOURNAL STAR

GETTING OUT THE VOTE

Jacob Denniston reminds commuters to vote at the intersection of 27th and O streets Tuesday morning.

LEGISLATURE

Ebke will face Brandt

Dorn, Schuller advance in District 30

JOANNE YOUNG
Lincoln Journal Star

Incumbent Sen. Laura Ebke ran second in her District 32 bid to return to the Nebraska Legislature. She said Tuesday night she expects a tussle in the next few months leading up to the general election.

Jefferson County farmer Tom Brandt led the pack of three candidates in that district by a good margin and will challenge Ebke in November. District 32 encompasses five counties and includes the southwest corner of Lancaster County.

Gov. Pete Ricketts’ pick, Al Riskowski, finished last and will not advance. He felt good about running a clean race, he said, even though all three District 32 candidates said they had to contend with negative ads, some of them funded by out-of-state groups, with messages that had nothing to do with the election.

Brandt, who said he’s a rural Republican, a centrist and independent thinker, has been active in community improvement in his hometown of Plymouth. He said voters want someone who will truly represent farmers and small towns.

People in his district are fed up with what’s going on in the

District 32



Ebke



Brandt

District 30



Dorn



Schuller

Legislature, the growing partisanship and nothing of substance getting done, he said.

Ebke, a Libertarian who is from Crete, stressed her four years of experience in the Legislature.

“I think that the hit pieces had a real weakening effect on me,” she said.

She lost some of the rural vote she needed, she said. “Now it’s up to me to go and get them back.”

In the District 30 race Myron Dorn of Adams and Don Schuller of Wymore will advance. In the general election, they said, they will continue to talk to voters about their concerns over high property taxes and fair funding for schools.

Dorn earlier this month had addressed negative ads against him that claimed he’d voted twice to give himself a raise on the Gage County Board and that he’d paid his property taxes late on multiple occasions. He said

those claims were untrue.

Dorn, the chairman of the Board of Supervisors, a farmer and Republican, said he had good name recognition from his public service and people recognized his leadership and ability to get things done.

Schuller, a Democrat, farms and runs a small conservation survey and design business. He said he thinks the voters in the district are ready for a strong, independent leader who will fight for working families. His message will not change, he said.

“What I believe in is our independent Legislature, and that we work together to do what’s best for Nebraskans,” Schuller said.

Joe Murray finished third in District 30 and will not advance to the general election.

Reach the writer at 402-473-7228 or young@journalstar.com. On Twitter @LJSLegislature.

Governor appointees advance

Clements, Thibodeau pass primary tests

CHRIS DUNKER
Lincoln Journal Star

A pair of senators appointed to the Legislature by Gov. Pete Ricketts passed their first electoral test on Tuesday.

Sen. Rob Clements, who was tapped by Ricketts to fill the seat vacated by Sen. Bill Kintner in 2017, pulled away from challenger Susan Lorence after the two were tied with 1,309 votes apiece at the 9:30 p.m. mark.

Clements continued to gain an edge over Lorence in the District 2 race, gathering nearly 48 percent of the vote by 11 p.m. The two will face one another again in the general election. James

Bond finished third.

Omaha Sen. Theresa Thibodeau, appointed to the District 6 seat last year by Ricketts after Sen. Joni Craighead resigned from the Legislature, held onto a 10-point advantage over challenger Machaela Cavanaugh.

Both Thibodeau and Cavanaugh advanced to November’s election, while a third candidate, Ricky Fulton, was eliminated.

Another governor-backed candidate also won over a former Ricketts foe in the District 16 race.

Ben Hansen surged past Chuck Hasebrook, who ran for governor against Ricketts in 2014, to earn nearly 59 percent of the vote by 11 p.m. Both candidates advanced to November’s general election.

But state Sen. Merv Riepe of Ralston, who spoke at a fund-raising event hosted for Ricketts in March that featured Vice President Mike Pence, fell behind the senator he replaced for the District 12 seat in the Legislature four years ago.

Former state Sen. Steve Lathrop, who left the Legislature four years ago due to Nebraska’s term limit law, carried 55.7 percent of the vote by 11 p.m., according to the unofficial results posted on the Nebraska Secretary of State’s website.

Incumbent Sens. Brett Lindstrom and John McCollister easily won the primaries in Districts 18 and 20, respectively.

Reach the writer at 402-473-7120 or cdunker@journalstar.com. On Twitter @ChrisDunkerLJS.

PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

Voters will choose between Watermeier, Yoakum

CHRIS DUNKER
Lincoln Journal Star

State Sen. Dan Watermeier and Christa Yoakum will go head-to-head for the District 1 seat on the Nebraska Public Service Commission in November after easily outdistancing their respective fields in Tuesday’s primary.

Watermeier, the Republican winner of Tuesday’s primary, more than doubled up the vote totals of his opponents, Ron Nolte of Plattsmouth

and Scott Smathers of Lincoln, capturing 59 percent of the vote.

On the Democratic side, Yoakum led in the vote count from the time the polls closed, easily gaining more than three out of every four votes cast over John Atkeison of Lincoln.

The winner in November’s general election will represent Lancaster, Gage, Cass, Otoe, Johnson, Nemaha, Pawnee and Richardson counties on the five-member Public Service Commission for a six-year term.

While the commission regulates telecommunications carriers, natural gas utilities, major oil pipelines and railroad safety among other issues, the Keystone XL pipeline emerged as a hot-button issue during the campaign.

Watermeier, a farmer from Syracuse who cast himself as the conservative candidate for the commission during the campaign, declined to say if he supported the pipeline, saying it could come before the

board once again.

Yoakum, a program coordinator at Nebraska Appleseed, opposed the pipeline along with the alternate route proposed by the PSC last year.

In District 3, Republican Tim Schram and Democrat Mike Forsythe, both of whom ran unopposed, will advance to the general election.

Reach the writer at 402-473-7120 or cdunker@journalstar.com. On Twitter @ChrisDunkerLJS.

RESULTS

(i) = incumbent

U.S. SENATE

As of 11:30 p.m.	Democrat	
Jane Raybould		54,417
Frank B. Svoboda		9,943
Larry Marvin		4,104
Chris Janicek	Republican	16,333
Jack Heidel		8,961
Dennis Frank Macek		5,334
Deb Fischer (i)		123,707
Jeffrey Lynn Stein		6,225
Todd F. Watson	Libertarian	19,092
Jim Schultz	U.S. HOUSE	1,096

DISTRICT 1

As of 11:30 p.m.	Democrat	
Dennis P. Crawford		11,350
Jessica McClure		22,045

DISTRICT 2

As of 11:30 p.m.	Democrat	
Jeff Fortenberry (i)		51,862

DISTRICT 3

As of 11:30 p.m.	Democrat	
Kara Eastman		16,851
Brad Ashford	Republican	16,282
Don Bacon (i)		28,766

DISTRICT 4

As of 11:30 p.m.	Democrat	
Paul Theobald		16,336
Kirk Penner	Republican	20,055
Larry Lee Scott Bolinger		1,919
Adrian Smith (i)		50,643
Aaron Kowalski		4,446

GOVERNOR

As of 11:30 p.m.	Republican	
Krystal Gabel		30,475
Pete Ricketts (i)	Democrats	133,357
Tyler A. Davis		9,638
Vanessa Gayle Ward		23,497
Bob Krist		50,728

SECRETARY OF STATE

As of 11:30 p.m.	Republican	
Bob Evmen		78,734
Debra Perrell	Democrat	55,631
Spencer Danner		70,011

STATE TREASURER

As of 11:30 p.m.	Republican	
John Murante		80,041
Taylor Royal		60,956

PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

DISTRICT 1

295 of 295 precincts	Republican	
Ron Nolte		6,470
Dan Watermeier		15,907
Scott Smathers	Democrat	4,548
John Atkeison		5,587
Christa Yoakum		18,314

LEGISLATURE

Top 2 vote-getters advance	District 2	
95 of 95 precincts		
Robert Clements (i)		2,847
James Bond		870
Susan D. Lorence	District 4	2,238
As of 11:30 p.m.		
Robert Bob Hillemann (i)		2,493
Shannon Corryell	District 6	1,856
As of 11:30 p.m.		
Ricky Fulton		348
Theresa Thibodeau (i)		2,842
Machaela Cavanaugh	District 8	2,269
As of 11:30 p.m.		
Mina Davis		937
Megan Hunt		2,497
Josh Henningsen	District 10	1,024
As of 11:30 p.m.		
Wendy DeBoer		2,537
Matt Deaver	District 12	1,934
As of 11:30 p.m.		
Merv Riepe (i)		1,894
Steve Lathrop	District 14	2,248
52 of 52 precincts		
Jeff Parris		2,292
John Arch	District 16	3,447
33 of 33 precincts		
Chuck Hasebrook		3,233
Ben Hansen	District 18	4,609
As of 11:30 p.m.		
Austin Henrich		262
Brett Lindstrom (i)		2,318
Scott Winkler	District 20	1,528
As of 11:30 p.m.		
Jackie Collett		1,614
John S. McCollister (i)		3,541
Chris Anne Dienstbier	District 22	409
As of 11:30 p.m.		
Doug Oertwich		1,361
Francis P. Kuehler		1,097
Kenneth G. Leischner		327
Mike Moser	District 24	3,564
34 of 34 precincts		
Mark A. Kolterman (i)		3,778
Stephanie Nantkies	District 26	1,465
199 of 199 precincts		
Matthew Hansen (i)		4,190
Bob Van Valkenburg	District 28	1,258
199 of 199 precincts		
Patty Pansing Brooks (i)	District 30	6,173
209 of 209 precincts		
Myron Dorn		3,154
Joe Murray		1,658
Don Schuller	District 32	2,967
237 of 237 precincts		
Al Riskowski		1,772
Laura Ebke (i)		2,603
Tom Brandt	District 34	3,495
As of 11:30 p.m.		
Curt Friesen (i)	District 36	5,767
65 of 65 precincts		
Matt Williams (i)	District 38	4,491
81 of 81 precincts		
Thomas Osborn		1,056
Marsha Rangmeyer		1,631
Andrew Murphy		297
Michael D. Combs		391
Dave Murman		3,202
Ronald L. Johnson	District 40	415
50 of 50 precincts		
Keith F. Kube		1,585
Shane Greckel		1,486
Timothy J. Gragert		1,665
Thomas E. Ferry		1,330
Michael A. Sobotka		1,149
Julie Thomsen	District 42	950
24 of 24 precincts		
Mike Groene (i)	District 44	4,228
57 of 57 precincts		
Dan Hughes (i)		5,233
Stephanie L. Malcolm	District 46	1,628
199 of 199 precincts		
Adam Morfeld (i)	District 48	2,334
30 of 30 precincts		
John P. Stinner (i)		3,776

NU BOARD OF REGENTS

Top 2 vote-getters advance	District 3	
As of 11:30 p.m.		
Jim Pillen	District 4	28,994
As of 11:30 p.m.		
Larry Bradley		4,887
Elizabeth O'Connor	District 5	12,236
As of 11:30 p.m.		
Robert M. Schafer (i): 16,268		
Robert J. Prokop		8,997
Joshua Redwine	District 8	6,916
As of 11:30 p.m.		
Hal Daub (i)		11,397
Barbara Weitz		11,759
Ryan Wilkins		3,932

LINCOLN AREA RACES

Top 2 vote-getters advance	STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION	
As of 11:30 p.m.	District 5	
Patricia H. Timm (i)		21,157
Maris Bentley		8,961

SOUTHEAST COMMUNITY COLLEGE

BOARD OF GOVERNORS

199 of 199 precincts	District 5	
Ellen M. Weissinger		8,093
Arlyn E. Uhrmacher		4,602
Joe Skopp		2,794

LOWER PLATTE SOUTH NRD

Subdistrict 1		
As of 11:30 p.m.		
Gary Hellerich (i)		1,090
Mark A. Christensen		1,056
Mechelle Sky Walker		1,325
Subdistrict 7		
Lucas Peterson		1,429
Joseph Gruber		680
Grady Wiedeman		656

LANCASTER COUNTY TREASURER

199 of 199 precincts	Republican	
Allen Dale Simpson		6,360
Andy F. Stebbing (i)		3,867
Matt Schulte	Democrat	10,121
199 of 199 precincts		
Rachel M. Garver		14,609
Andrew Stock		6,504