

Abortion proves key issue in primaries

By Jerry Filteau
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON — The abortion issue played a significant role in several elections Sept. 11 as 10 states and the District of Columbia wrapped up their primary season and turned their eyes toward general elections in November.

Key states where abortion was an issue among contenders for November ballot slots were New Hampshire, Maryland, Minnesota and Wisconsin.

In the Upper Midwest and New Hampshire the majority of voters endorsed several abortion foes over abortion backers in races where abortion was one of the main campaign issues.

In Maryland, however, where an abortion-law filibuster tied up the state Legislature last spring and abortion-rights activists targeted several anti-abortion incumbents for defeat, abortion-rights candidates won three of the four key races in which abortion views figured prominently.

Here's a rundown of the votes:

- In Minnesota, incumbent Gov. Rudy Perpich defeated former commerce commissioner Mike Hatch and one minor candidate for the Democratic nomination for governor.

Businessman Jon Grunseth defeated

State Auditor Arne Carlson and four others for the Republican gubernatorial nomination.

Both Perpich and Grunseth are abortion opponents. Hatch and Carlson ran as "pro-choice" candidates.

"The abortion issue played awfully, awfully big — much bigger than anyone expected," Carlson said afterward.

In state legislative races in which contrasting abortion positions also figured strongly, three went to abortion opponents while an abortion-rights incumbent barely survived a close challenge in a fourth race.

- In Wisconsin, of six campaigns for open legislative seats in which abortion was an issue, candidates backed by the Wisconsin Right to Life Political Action Committee won their party's nomination in five.

Abortion opponent Leon Vanevenhoven took the Republican nomination for 5th District state representative away from the incumbent, Rep. Gary Schmidt, an abortion supporter.

- Incumbent Rep. Wayne Wood, an abortion opponent, withstood a challenge by Lew Mittness for the Democratic nomination in the 44th District. Mittness had been backed by the National Abortion Rights Action League of Wisconsin.

- In Maryland, three Democratic state senators involved last spring in a successful filibuster against a liberalized abortion law

lost to challengers after abortion-rights groups targeted Maryland as a key state because of the Legislature's narrow divisions on abortion.

U.S. Rep. Roy Dyson, an abortion opponent seeking the Democratic nomination for a sixth term in Maryland's 1st Congressional District, fought off a challenge from state legislator Barbara Kreamer, who was endorsed by the National Abortion Rights Action League.

- In the race in New Hampshire for the Republican nomination to the U.S. Senate seat occupied by Republican Gordon Humphrey, abortion opponent Bob Smith defeated abortion backer Tom Christo by a 2-1 margin.

Humphrey, who also opposes abortion, won the Republican nomination for a state Senate seat over abortion supporter Jack Sherburne.

Abortion foe Larry Brady beat abortion backer William Zelfiff as GOP nominee for U.S. representative in New Hampshire's 1st Congressional District.

The New York Times reported recently that this November's gubernatorial elections around the country will include at least four races pitting Democratic abortion foes against Republican abortion backers — a reversal of traditional party alignments which the newspaper called "an illustration of how complex the issue's political impact has become."



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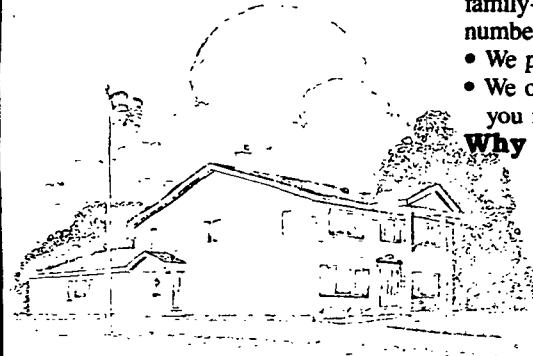
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