

Cannon victorious: Congressman crushes challenger, 56-44%

By Bob Bernick Jr.

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U.S. Rep. Chris Cannon dodged another political bullet Tuesday, winning the Republican Party's nomination for the 3rd Congressional District, late returns of the 2006 primary election showed.

As in Cannon's 2004 GOP primary victory, immigration was a key issue this Republican race as well. Cannon, R-Utah, is basically a backer of President Bush's immigration policy, which includes a guest-worker program. Jacob drew a hard line and got anti-illegal-immigration support from a number of quarters, including independent radio ads run by the conservative Team America political action committee.

"Things are looking very good," Cannon said late Tuesday, just before Jacob called him to concede the race.

Cannon said he hopes that should he win re-election in November, come 2008 the immigration issue will be settled and he won't find another "anti-immigration candidate" running against him within the Republican Party.

"We can solve this issue," he said. "Eighty percent of the American people want a reasonable solution."

Cannon said that most 3rd District voters never got to know Jacob. "And I believe I did get a bump when President and Laura Bush endorsed me — it was a high point in my campaign."

Jacob said, "It's hard to beat an incumbent — I had to beat (President Bush), too."

Jacob will not run against Cannon again. "I've done that. Chris is what the people want — they support his immigration policies."

But Jacob said he will seek public office again. "Yeah, this is just the beginning. The president owes me one — and I'm hoping he'll endorse me" when Jacob seeks another high office.

Jacob said, ultimately, he didn't run a good enough campaign. "I didn't do it right."

He added that Cannon had made a number of promises, especially about being tough on illegal immigrants. "I hope the commitments made will be kept — we'll be watching for that." Jacob had said previously that he would support Cannon should he win the GOP nomination. "I'll even help him raise money for the final election."

Michael Clara, spokesman for the Utah Hispanic Legislative Task Force, said Cannon's victory reaffirms support for Bush's immigration proposal.

"It says more about Cannon, he travels the path of the rational middle ground President Bush has been talking about," Clara said. "It's an indication of what's going to happen across the nation."

John Jacob hugs his wife, Diane, as they watch results come in for the 3rd District. Jacob saw his campaign's momentum stagger the last two weeks. First came charges (which Jacob said he proved unfounded) that he improperly hired an immigrant couple several years ago. Then Jacob had to deny that he gambled to excess as a young man. Finally came comments to a newspaper's editorial board that the devil may have been hampering his efforts to dispose of certain assets, thus harming his campaign funding.

Dan Jones, who polled the race for the Deseret Morning News and KSL-TV, said he noticed Jacob's support dwindling as last weekend approached.

In a campaign where Jacob was trying to get citizens to know him, to trust what he'd do in Washington, D.C., such bad news over the last two weeks didn't help.

Still, Jacob made a serious run at Cannon. He actually got more delegate votes in the state Republican Convention last month than did Cannon.

And Jacob made a significant financial commitment. Federal Election Commission reports show that Jacob, a multi-millionaire through water and land development, gave his campaign \$413,000, more than 95 percent of all the money he raised.

Cannon, who in the primary campaign's final days got more than \$100,000 from PACs representing businesses benefiting from cheap immigrant labor, loaned his campaign nearly \$140,000 of his own money.

Pre-primary election reports show Cannon spent \$617,119 to Jacob's \$346,199. Those numbers don't include late spending on TV and radio ads and get-out-the-vote efforts.

Randy Minson, Jacob's campaign manager, said the challenger's camp believed the low voter turnout was helping them Tuesday. Between Jacob's telephoning into at least 5,000 supporters' homes asking them to vote and other groups' turnout efforts, "some people were called six times — they were driven crazy," Minson said. "We did the best we could." But it turned out not to be enough.

While the 3rd District was the high-profile race Tuesday, a number of legislative and county intra-party contests were also decided.

Salt Lake County Sheriff Aaron Kennard was coasting to victory over Brent Cardall, partial results showed.

And in a couple of tough Republican contests, the Legislature will lose four incumbents.

Longtime Rep. Dave Ure, R-Kamas, lost to newcomer Kevin Van Tassell in Ure's attempt to jump up to the Senate. Ure, who barely lost two recent elections to be speaker of the House, had geography against him. Senate District 26 is based in Uintah Basin, and Ure was running from the far eastern edge of the district. Van Tassell is a Zions Bank branch manager in Vernal.

Sen. David Thomas, R-South Weber, lost to Ogden's police chief, Jon Greiner, in Senate District 18. Greiner had 54 percent of the vote.

Rep. Jim Ferrin, R-Orem, was beaten by Stephen Sandstrom in a race that saw the incumbent greatly criticized over conflicts of interest in Ferrin's charter school financing/construction businesses.

Rep. Peggy Wallace, R-West Jordan, lost by a slim 24 votes to fellow Republican Jim Bird. Wallace had been criticized publicly for sponsoring several unpopular bills, including one that would have done away with Utah's no-fault divorce law.

Rep. Sheryl Allen, R-Bountiful, won easily. Allen, who directs the Davis School District's foundation, was again challenged from the right of the Republican Party by Mark Jacobs.

Two themes of recent legislative races played out again this primary: the reoccurring banks-versus-credit union spat and the ongoing battle between a pro-school choice group fighting it out with public education supporters, like the Utah Education Association, the main teacher union in the state.