



Office of Senate President Pro Tempore Del Marsh
Press Clips
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Alabama GOP chief says party set for clean sweep in November, praises Palmer as 'constitutional conservative' (AL.com)

The head of Alabama's Republican Party said Tuesday's primary runoff results are proof of the overwhelming strength the GOP enjoys in the state.

"With the closing of the polls Tuesday evening, the stage is set for the November General Election and I believe that our party is fielding one of the strongest tickets in state history," Alabama GOP Chairman Bill Armistead said.

"We will continue to hold every statewide office, six of seven Congressional seats, two United States Senators and a majority of the seats in the Alabama House and Senate."

Armistead said GOP efforts are aided in part by President Barack Obama.

"With...one of the most unpopular presidents in American history in the White House, I believe we have a good chance of running the table in November," he said.

District 6 race

Armistead also commented on the contentious race for U.S. House District 6. Gary Palmer handily defeated challenger Paul DeMarco Tuesday but not before a brutal race that involved Armistead issuing a sternly worded message to the candidates to keep their campaigns positive.

Armistead said the party's job is now to work towards November's General Election.

"With Gary Palmer's election to Congress, I am confident that we will be sending a constitutional conservative to Washington to help our Republican majority in the House put the brakes on the runaway spending of Barack Obama, Harry Reid and Nancy Pelosi," he said.

Armistead said with the GOP's statewide ticket now completed - Republicans John Merrill as Secretary of State, Jim Ziegler as State Auditor and Chip Beeker as Public Service Commissioner, Place 2 - the party is in a position to have a clean sweep in November.

"With Gov. Robert Bentley, U.S. Sen. Jeff Sessions, Attorney General Luther Strange and our six Republican congressional candidates leading our ticket, I feel very good about the outcome of the

General Election. I believe November will be a watershed election for the Republican Party in Alabama," he said.

Gary Palmer swamps Paul DeMarco in 6th District Republican runoff (AL.com)

After a grueling, mud-stained six-week runoff and, before that, a months-long primary campaign, the battle for the Alabama 6th Congressional district Republican nomination is over. Gary Palmer has emerged the winner of the Republican nomination for the open seat, beating out Paul DeMarco.

In this heavily Republican district comprised of Bibb, Blount, Chilton, Coosa, Shelby, and parts of Jefferson County, the winner of the Republican nomination has a very strong shot at winning the general election in November to replace U.S. Rep. Spencer Bachus, R-Vestavia Hills, who is retiring at the end of this term.

Palmer won 64 percent of the vote to DeMarco's 36 percent. Palmer started with a large lead early in the evening, and never lost it as results came in. Nearly 75,000 voters cast ballots in the runoff.

Palmer will face Democrat Avery Vise on Nov. 4 in what's considered one of the safest GOP districts in the nation.

"I've never run for office for and I really didn't know what to expect, but the thing that's most gratifying is to see how many people, really behind you and believe in you and believe in the country," Palmer told AL.com when asked how he felt Tuesday night.

"It's incredibly humbling, and I just wish people could get a sense of that, and I think it would really motivate people to get involved."

In a speech to supporters in Birmingham Tuesday night, Palmer said his campaign was supported by prayer.

"Politics shouldn't be a career. It should be a mission," he said.

He told AL.com Tuesday that he felt a call that started when he heard that Bachus was resigning after this term. He said he told his wife he didn't want to run, but she encouraged him.

"I know this is not what we want, but I don't think it's about what we want, it's about what we're supposed to do," Ann Palmer told her husband, he said. "That really convicted me."

The fact that it was a call gave him confidence, he said.

"I knew this was a call, and because it was a call I knew it was going to come out the way it was supposed to," Palmer told AL.com. "That's one of the reasons why I've never been concerned about how it's going to come out."

Asked what DeMarco and Palmer talked about during his concession Tuesday night, Palmer said he wanted to "renew his friendship" with DeMarco.

"He just congratulated me and I told him that I'd like to get with him sometime and renew our friendship, and I am sincere about that," Palmer said. "I made a decision years ago even in public policy that I would not make it personal, and I try not to take it personal."

DeMarco conceded to a raucous group of supporters in the lobby of Aloft Hotel at 8:40 p.m. Tuesday night.

"First of all, I have congratulated Gary Palmer and I wish him the best for November," DeMarco said. He thanked his supporters effusively.

"We love this country, so we want what's best for us," DeMarco said. He urged the supporters to "push this country forward, to push our elected leaders to do what's in the best interest" of the union.

"We will all move forward from tonight," DeMarco said. "We will all continue to move forward because we live in the greatest country in the world."

DeMarco also asked for a round of applause for his wife, Jacqueline. "She's been through a lot these past six months, in addition to giving birth to our child, so, thank you, I love you," DeMarco said to laughs and cheers.

Palmer, who is the chief development officer of the conservative thinktank the Alabama Policy Institute, was the underdog coming into the runoff.

After a late surge before the June 3 primary, Palmer earned 20 percent of the vote in that primary to come in second and make it into the runoff with DeMarco, beating out five other candidates. DeMarco cruised to first place in the June 3 primary with 33 percent.

A lackluster debate performance at Regions Field in June signaled the start of runoff troubles for DeMarco. Then, a negative ad that was badly received by many seemed to put him farther off course. A poll last week by the firm Cygnal projected Palmer would win by 30 points.

Palmer's victory came despite his campaign raising significantly less than DeMarco. Combined, both candidates raised well more than \$2.5 million over the course of the primary and runoff campaigns.

As of the June 25 required Federal Election Commission "pre-runoff" financial report, DeMarco raised a total of \$1.6 million, and Palmer raised \$980,000. Fundraising for both candidates has continued since June 25.

Immediately after the race was called for Palmer, Alabama U.S. Reps. Martha Roby and Bradley Byrne both sent congratulations for Palmer, as did Club for Growth, an independent PAC that backed Palmer and ran negative ads ag

[Clyde Chambliss defeats Harris Garner in Senate District 30 GOP primary \(AL.com\)](#)

Prattville City Councilman Clyde Chambliss has defeated Millbrook businessman Harris Garner in the Republican primary for Senate District 30.

With 84 percent of precincts in, Chambliss had 7,258 votes, or 63 percent of the vote, to Garner's 4,193, or 37 percent.

Chambliss had to fight back against Garner's charges he supported Common Core, an educational agenda opposed by many conservative voters. But in the end, Chambliss' ads countering the claims and citing Ronald Reagan's 11th Commandment -- "Thou shalt not speak ill of a fellow Republican" -- worked.

Helping was the fact that Chambliss was very well known to voters in Prattville and Autauga County. In 1996, Chambliss was elected to his first of three terms on the Autauga County Commission.

The Senate seat became open in late 2013 when state Sen. Bryan Taylor, a Republican, said he would retire.

The initial Republican primary had four candidates. On June 3, the field was narrowed to Chambliss and Garner.

District 30 includes all of Autauga and Coosa counties, most of Elmore County and parts of Chilton and Tallapoosa counties.

There is no Democratic candidate for the seat. Bryan Morgan of Prattville has qualified to run as an independent.

Chambliss completed a degree in civil engineering from the University of Alabama in 1992, according to his campaign website.

The district leans strongly Republican.

[Shay Shelnett wins runoff in Alabama Senate District 17 race \(AL.com\)](#)

Political newcomer Shay Shelnett will be the new senator in Alabama's District 17. With his narrow victory in the runoff tonight over opponent Brett King, Shelnett wins the Republican primary. No Democrats filed for Senate District 17, and Shelnett will not face opposition for the state Senate seat, which is being vacated by Sen. Scott Beason, in the November general election.

Shelnett, a realtor from Trussville, received 8,591 votes, or 52 percent of the vote. King, an attorney from Locust Fork, received 8,051 votes.

"I just want to thank all my supporters, and there's way to many of them to mention," Shelnett told AL.com. "I want to congratulate Brett on a well-run campaign and I'm sure we'll see him on a future ballot."

District 17 covers most of north Jefferson County and parts of Blount, Jefferson, St. Clair and Talladega counties.

Greg Albritton rolls to comfortable victory in Alabama Senate District 22 GOP runoff (AL.com)

Greg Albritton withstood a weak showing in his opponent's home county Tuesday and rolled to a comfortable victory in the Republican primary runoff for the District 22 Alabama Senate nomination.

With complete but unofficial results,, Albritton won 58 percent of the vote over Harry D'Olive. He will face Democrat Susan Smith in the November general election.

"I'm happy. We've worked hard. People here have worked very hard," Albritton said. "It's always better winning than losing. I've done both."

Albritton and D'Olive finished first and second, respectively, in a five-candidate primary field on June 3. During that contest, D'Olive ran up large margins in Baldwin and Mobile counties but lagged far behind in the other six counties that make up the sprawling district.

Tuesday's election was a replay of that dynamic. D'Olive won big in Baldwin County but could not overcome Albritton's advantage elsewhere in the district, which includes Escambia County and parts of Clarke, Choctaw, Conecuh, Washington, Monroe and Mobile counties, in addition to Baldwin.

D'Olive, who left the Baldwin County elections center without speaking to reporters, won 70 percent of the Baldwin vote. Escambia County was nearly a mirror image; Albritton took 85 percent there.

Albritton likely will be the favorite in the fall in a district that now leans more heavily Republican after a redrawing of the political map following the 2010 census. Smith, a member of the Atmore City Council, stepped forward to run after incumbent Marc Keahey, D-Grove Hill, dropped out of the race after the qualifying period for party primaries had closed.

On paper, D'Olive and Albritton shared more similarities than differences. Both are lawyers by trade with solo practices in the home communities – Bay Minette for D'Olive and Conecuh County for Albritton.

Both long have been active in politics but are not strangers to stinging defeats. Albritton served a term in the state House of Representatives from 2002 to 2006 but lost a re-election bid to Harry Shiver in the Republican primary.

D'Olive served a little more than a year as Baldwin County probate judge after his ailing father stepped down in 1999. But he lost a bid for a full term in 2000 and also lost the GOP nomination for the office in 2012. He did serve briefly as mayor of Silverhill but left office to attend law school.

Albritton and D'Olive also voiced similar views on the issues. Both said they oppose Alabama's adoption of the education reform known as the Common Core State Standards Initiative. Both support granting the right of motorists to have loaded guns without concealed-carry permits.

Albritton went after D'Olive for comments that seemed to support the consideration of taxing Internet sales. D'Olive told Al.com/Press-Register reporters and editors that it was an idea that should be considered to address the state's budget problems, but he later backed off that statement and said he merely was identifying an idea that some people have said was an option.

D'Olive had promised to focus his energy as state senator on economic development. He had promised to play an active role in luring manufacturers to a "mega site" that the Baldwin County Commission purchased north of Bay Minette.

Albritton had said his emphasis would be on streamlining government and eliminating some of the boards and commissions that license and regulate dozens of professions in Alabama. Those regulations, he argued, make it harder for some people to start businesses and act as a drag on economic growth.

During the campaign, Albritton raised more cash and spent more money than D'Olive. He relied heavily on political action committees tied to the Poarch Creek Band of Indians and the Alabama Farmers Federation. D'Olive said the Farmers Federation money – and in-kind services provided by the PAC – raised questions about Albritton's ability to represent the district on homeowners insurance reform because of the group's affiliation with Alfa Mutual Insurance Group.

Albritton said the endorsement he received was because of his strong support for farmers, not insurance companies.

[Rep. John Merrill defeats Reese McKinney for Republican nomination for secretary of state \(AL.com\)](#)

State Rep. John Merrill of Tuscaloosa defeated former Montgomery County Probate Judge Reese McKinney today in the Republican runoff for secretary of state.

The Associated Press called the race for Merrill at about 9:15 p.m.

With 98 percent of the precincts reporting, Merrill had received 106,666 votes, 53 percent. McKinney had received 93,550 votes, 47 percent.

Merrill, 50, moves on to face Democrat Lula Albert-Kaigler in the Nov. 4 general election.

Merrill was elected to the Legislature in 2010 as part of a new Republican majority.

A native of Heflin, Merrill is a business development officer at First Federal Bank in Tuscaloosa.

McKinney was a longtime assistant to Montgomery Mayor Emory Folmar.

He was then probate judge in Montgomery County for 14 years before losing a re-election bid in 2012.

Merrill had finished first in a three-man field in the June 3 primary with 40 percent of the vote, while McKinney ran a close second with 38 percent.

The secretary of state is Alabama's top election official and is responsible for campaign finance reports and maintaining many types of business records and other records. The job pays a salary of about \$85,000.

[Chip Beeker unseats incumbent Terry Dunn in GOP contest for Place 2 on Public Service Commission \(AL.com\)](#)

Chip Beeker of Eutaw unseated Terry Dunn on Tuesday as Public Service Commission member in the Republican race to hold the Place 2 seat.

With 95 percent of Alabama precincts in, Beeker had 108,805 votes, or 59 percent, to Terry Dunn's 74,613, or 41 percent.

The race was as much about incumbent Dunn as it was about President Barack Obama. Beeker's ads bashing Obama's energy policies made news across the nation.

Beeker, who ran on a platform of opposing Obama and the EPA's environmental policies, did not let up after winning, vowing to fight on in an email to AL.com: "This election was a referendum on the liberal environmentalists who are trying to invade our state and a win for Alabama consumers."

Beeker had bested Dunn in the June 3 Republican primary too, but neither candidate broke 50 percent, forcing a runoff. On June 3, Beeker won 133,285 votes, or 39 percent, to Dunn's 111,079, or 33 percent.

The race had been marked by charges Dunn was in the pocket of environmentalists and those opposed to coal, while Dunn charged Beeker was in the pocket of Alabama Power and other utilities.

Terry Dunn

Terry Dunn, incumbent PSC Place 2 official, who lost re-election in the GOP runoff on July 15.

Dunn drew the wrath of fellow Republicans in early 2013, when he asked for a formal rate review of the rates of Alabama Power Co. Dunn said the review would be under oath, and would examine why Alabama Power's profits were so high.

Republicans said Dunn was helping the environmentalists and those opposed to coal, and Dunn drew three opponents in the June 3 GOP primary.

Beeker, a former Greene County elected official, was the best-funded of them all, even drawing the endorsements of GOP heavyweights Haley Barbour and Pat Boone.

Beeker released a statement to the media promising to keep fighting President Barack Obama, the EPA and the "war on coal."

"I look forward to working with the other Republican members of the PSC as we keep utility rates affordable for the consumers we serve, transform the commission into an economic development tool, and combat the job-killing, anti-coal policies of Barack Obama and his liberal extremist cronies at the EPA," Beeker said in an email to the media. "Obama has declared a three front war against Alabama jobs, Alabama families, and Alabama coal, so this is no time for shrinking violets. I'll use my seat on the PSC to join the fight and take the battle right back at him."

"Today's vote was a referendum on the liberal environmentalists' agenda, and the consumers across the state have let their voices be heard by rejecting it soundly," Beeker said.

The three-member PSC regulates utilities and inspects railways. All three members are Republicans.

Republican Place 1 Commissioner Jeremy Oden won his GOP race on June 3. Oden and Beeker face no opposition in November.

This story will be updated.

Jim Zeigler defeats Dale Peterson in GOP state auditor runoff (AL.com)

Jim Zeigler, who was elected to the Public Service Commission 40 years ago but had lost a string of races since, captured the Republican nomination for state auditor today, defeating Dale Peterson in a runoff.

The Associated Press called the race for Zeigler about 8:30 p.m.

With 99 percent of precincts reporting, Zeigler had received 129,268 votes, 65 percent. Peterson had received 69,787 votes, 35 percent.

Zeigler, a Mobile lawyer who specializes in elder care planning, will face Democrat Miranda Joseph in the Nov. 4 general election.

The state auditor keeps track of state property worth \$500 or more and other property considered sensitive. The office is also responsible for reports to the governor on state spending and receipts. The job pays a salary of \$85,000 a year.

Zeigler served one term on the Public Service Commission as a Democrat in the 1970s. After that, he ran unsuccessfully as a Democrat for the state Board of Education, state Supreme Court and state treasurer. As a Republican, he narrowly lost a race for the Court of Civil Appeals in 1996 and lost a PSC race in 1998.

"We are very thankful to our supporters all over the state and to the voters," Zeigler said tonight.

He said he would run as though he were the underdog in the general election because he said he thought the Democratic party would focus on the auditor's race, partly because the auditor appoints one of three members to county voting registrar boards.

"They think I'm the weak sister on the ticket, so we're prepared to run as if we're behind," Zeigler said.

Peterson, 68, a retired businessman who lives in Shelby County, was a political unknown four years ago when he ran for agriculture commissioner. He lost that race even though a campaign video of him

riding a horse, toting a rifle and talking tough about public corruption and other issues became a YouTube sensation.

He was charged with misdemeanor theft in a pair of shoplifting arrests at Hoover stores in 2012 and 2013.

Peterson said he did not intend to steal. He did not fight the charges in municipal court and instead chose to appeal to Jefferson County Circuit Court, where he can get jury trials. The cases are pending.

[State Senator Shadrack McGill falls short in bid to become Jackson County Revenue Commissioner \(AL.com\)](#)

State Senator Shadrack McGill was defeated Tuesday night in his bid to be Jackson County's Revenue Commissioner.

AL.com news partner WHNT reports Kathy Thompson received 1,418 votes, or 63 percent, to McGill's 834 votes, or 37 percent.

McGill, R-Macedonia, was propelled into the spotlight in 2010 after a stunning victory over longtime Sen. Lowell Barron. He announced in December 2013 he would not seek a second term to represent District 8, which includes Jackson County as well as parts of DeKalb and Madison County.

During his time in the legislature, McGill was ranked as one of the state's most conservative lawmakers. He was propelled into the national spotlight when he and his wife, Heather, appeared on "Good Morning America," after Heather posted on Facebook about women approaching her husband, including strippers sent to their home prior to the 2010 election.

Tuesday night, McGill took to Facebook to congratulate Thompson: "Just want to say thanks to all who voted and supported me. It was a great run. Congratulations to Kathy Thompson for making it to the general election! We wish you the best. -Team McGill."

[Southern Poverty Law Center agrees with Sen. Cam Ward's testimony on prison reform \(AL.com\)](#)

The Southern Poverty Law Center, which is representing inmates who are suing the state over its medical care for inmates, responded today to state Sen. Cam Ward's appearance before a Congressional panel.

Ward and three others testified about prison reform to a subcommittee of the U.S. House Judiciary Committee.

Ward said other states, especially Texas, have shown that prison reforms can work. Ward said it's a matter of whether Alabama can muster the will to make decisions that might not be politically popular, such as expanding community corrections, drug courts and prison education programs.

Jerri Katzerman, deputy legal director for the SPLC, agreed with the gist of Ward's comments.

"Cam Ward is certainly right when he says that 'locking them up and throwing away the key will not work — and has not worked,' " Katzerman said. "He outlines many promising steps the state could take to reduce its prison population without compromising public safety. The real issue, as Cam recognizes, is whether 'we have the political will' to do what needs to be done. We're hopeful and look forward to seeing the recommendations of the Alabama Prison Reform Task Force."

[Sen. Cam Ward to congressional panel: 'Locking them up and throwing away the key is not the solution' \(AL.com\)](#)

State Sen. Cam Ward told a congressional panel today that Alabama has a "failed corrections system" and that the "political courage" to invest in programs such as community corrections and drug courts are the key to fixing it.

Ward was one of four witnesses to appear before a subcommittee of the U.S. House Judiciary Committee.

He told the panel that Alabama's prisons are the nation's most overcrowded, at 192 percent of capacity, yet the state still has the nation's eighth highest crime rate.

"That tells us one thing. Locking them up and throwing away the key is not the solution to our problem," Ward said.

Read what Ward told the panel.pdf

Others who testified during the 90-minute hearing were Pennsylvania Department of Corrections Secretary John Wetzel; former Texas House Corrections Chairman Jerry Madden; and Nancy La Vigne, director of the Justice Policy Center for the Urban Institute.

Ward told the panel that the Habitual Offender Act and other enhanced sentences and limited parole for nonviolent offenders have caused a problem that is not politically popular to address.

"We have stuck our head in the sand and acted like it didn't exist, when every day it was right there in front of us," he said.

Ward chairs the state's new Prison Reform Task Force, which is working with The Council of State Governments Justice Center to study and propose recommendations for improving the criminal justice system.

The task force hopes to make proposals to the Legislature next year.

Ward said other states have shown reform can work, and said Texas is probably the best example.

Madden, the former Texas lawmaker who helped lead reform efforts there, told the panel about his state's success in prison reform.

Madden said reforms passed in Texas in 2006 expanded treatment for drug and alcohol abuse, and mental health and specialty courts for drugs, mental health, veterans and prostitution.

Before reforms, Madden said projections were that the inmate population would increase by about 18,000 by 2012, requiring costly new prison construction.

After the reforms, he said, crime rates are down to the levels of 1968 and the state was able to close three prisons and six juvenile facilities without any new construction.

Ward told the panel that Alabama needs to study what has worked in Texas and other states because it cannot afford to build enough prison space otherwise.

Ward said keys to reform in Alabama include expansion of community corrections programs, more drug courts and mental health courts and more prison education programs.

Forty-eight of Alabama's 67 counties have community corrections programs, Ward said. He said he would like to see that expanded to all counties with more uniformity.

About 3,700 offenders who would otherwise be prison-bound are in community corrections, Ward said. The cost to taxpayers is \$11.50 per offender per day, as opposed to \$42.50 per day for state inmates.

And even at the \$42.50 per day, Alabama is spending about 20 percent less per inmate than Georgia and Florida, he said.

He noted some progress in Alabama, such as the cooperation of all three branches of government in the new Justice Reinvestment Initiative with The Council of State Governments, and the development of presumptive sentencing guidelines to bring more uniformity to sentencing around the state.

"This is not a politically popular issue, but it's one that Republicans and Democrats should stand together alike and try our best to fix," Ward said.

[Cotton check-off program win likely means mandatory fee in Alabama \(AL.com\)](#)

The \$1 per bale fee that funds Alabama's cotton check-off program will likely be mandatory after state voters overwhelmingly approved a constitutional amendment to that effect today. The amendment passed by about a 2-1 majority statewide.

Farmers had been able to apply for refunds for money paid into the state program, which is a pool of funds used for cotton research and promotion.

The Alabama Farmers Federation had estimated that less than 10 percent of the state's cotton farmers requested refunds.

The amendment passed by voters today allows the Alabama Cotton Commission to poll state farmers, asking that the refund provision end. The amendment was supported by the state's farming community but opposed by groups such as Conservatives for Good Government, which opposed the idea of a government agency, in this case the Alabama Department of Agriculture and Industries, being allowed to collect then disperse the fee.