

Harris defeats veteran Boozer for GOP nomination in 9th District Senate race

Anti-abortion physician wins in bitter contest

By LARRY CARSON

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Veteran Baltimore County Republican State Sen. F. Vernon Boozer was knocked from his seat after nearly two decades last night by a conservative, anti-abortion physician who painted him as too liberal.

The decisive loss in the 9th District was the most dramatic upset in yesterday's lightly attended primary elections, and the most bitter contest in the county this year, as evidenced by Boozer's concession speech last night.

"I'm not going to call my opponent. Normally I would. The stuff you read about crossed the lines — needle exchange, partial birth abortions and the rest of the scurrilous stuff you read," Boozer told a shocked group of supporters at a somber Cockeysville banquet hall.

Dr. Andrew Harris, the victor, said "It was a long, hard path. We proved the election process works. We're very happy." He will face Democrat Anthony O. Blades, 61, of Monkton, a first-time candidate, in the general election.

In the other major primary battle, west-side Democratic Sen. Dolores G. Kelley appeared to be winning 2-1 against school board member and attorney Robert Fulton Dashiell, based on partial returns.

A lower profile race in Dundalk featured Democratic Party central committee member Anthony J. Narutowicz, who tried to unseat veteran Sen. Norman R. Stone Jr.

In the background are several races for House of Delegates seats, from the fractious northwest county's 11th District to the eastern county's 6th and 7th Districts, where longtime incumbents tried to remain in power.

The Boozer-Harris race quickly became a bitter battle of hard words and hurt feelings.

"He started by calling me a liar;

I consider that a personal, negative attack," said Harris, a 41-year old obstetric anesthesiologist making his first run for public office.

"I'm a person who stands up for his convictions, and that's what this race is all about," he said.

Harris accused Boozer, 62, a state senator since 1981 who serves as Senate minority leader, of being too liberal, voting among other things for a needle exchange program in Baltimore that failed to get General Assembly approval.

Lopsided voting

Boozer says Harris "has continually lied about things," to distort his legislative record. He said the needle exchange program is a public health program that would have saved people's lives and state treatment money.

"I can't imagine a physician that could oppose that kind of program," he said, accusing Harris and his supporter, Carroll County state Sen. Larry E. Haines, of being "ideologues" mainly interested in opposing abortion. Boozer is a pro-choice Republican.

At the polls, the margin for Harris seemed lopsided, at least among Republicans voting at Dulaney High School.

"There's no way I would vote for Boozer. I'm NRA and I vote," said Raymond Szymczak, 39, after voting. Don and Ruth Rittler, both 58, said they refused to vote for Boozer because he is an abortion rights legislator. Others disliked some of Boozer's private law clients, including liquor merchants.

In the western county's 10th District, covering a slice of West-Baltimore and most of the county's Liberty Road corridor, Dashiell, an attorney, offered himself as an "impatient" man who wants "to uplift the African-American community in this district."

Speaking at a recent candidates' forum in Randallstown, Dashiell attacked the mostly white county power structure's attitude toward the growing black community, suggesting that Kelley, the county's first black state

senator, is too closely tied to that structure to be effective.

"This county has for too long ignored the legitimate interests of the African-American community," he charged.

As an example, he cited County Executive C.A. Dutch Ruppersberger's criticism last week of Community Colleges of Baltimore County Chancellor Irving Pressley McPhail for a thank-you letter he sent to black faculty members that cautioned them to "watch each others' backs" and quoted several African proverbs.

The letter upset some white faculty, who said it was racially divisive, and prompted Ruppersberger, who is backing Kelley, to criticize McPhail for using "poor judgment."

But Dashiell has had problems running his campaign. By Monday he still hadn't filed either of two required campaign finance reports, state election board officials said. He was also cited for placing campaign signs in public right-of-ways.

A coalition builder

Kelley said this week that she's a coalition builder, not an "ombudsman for every member of my race."

"I think Dutch has been good for the county," she said, citing the county's last-minute efforts to get funding for a new elementary school near Security Square Mall to relieve chronic crowding. "I would rather deliver for people than yell and scream," she said.

Although lower profile, several of the House of Delegates races also may result in changes.

Dr. Dan Morhaim, Mike Finifter and Bob Frank — the three incumbent Democratic delegates in the 11th District covering Owings Mills and Reisterstown — are running separate campaigns, which has encouraged several aggressive newcomers to run.

Robyn I. Stevens, an aide to unopposed state Sen. Paula C. Hollinger and Robert A. "Bobby" Zirkin have both mounted challenges.