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Senate incumbent wins primary

By Steve Haynes

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Incumbent state Sen. Ralph Ostmeier swept to victory in Tuesday's Republican primary, rolling up a 2-to-1 margin over challenger John Miller of Norton and apparently carrying all 14 counties in the reshaped 40th District.

With all precincts reporting, Rep. Ward Cassidy of St. Francis won a battle of incumbents in the 120th House District. He led Rep. Rick Billinger of Goodland by 396 votes.

Cassidy, a school counselor and former principal, and Billinger, a retired businessman and former mayor of Goodland, were thrown together in the 120th when a redistricting map drawn by federal judges

Conservatives win big in Senate races

By John Hanna

AP Political Writer

TOPEKA — Conservative Republicans who've been working to push GOP moderates out of state legislatures across the country have scored big victories in Kansas, where a state Senate that has been an obstacle to fiscal and social policy changes is likely to have a

solid majority on the right next year.

Unlike other states, where results for conservatives have been mixed, in Kansas, Tuesday's primary saw voters in GOP races oust seven incumbent moderate senators. An eighth, Senate President Steve Morris, a moderate Hugoton Republican, trailed his conservative opponent, likely marking the end of Morris' 20-year career as a legislator.

The targeted moderate incumbents raised a huge war chest and outspent their conservative challengers, often by margins of 3-to-1 or more.

The moderates received financial support from the state's largest teachers' union and labor groups normally aligned with Democrats. Conservatives

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R. Ostmeier



Ward Cassidy

593-122 and Decatur 630-139, piling up a lead Billinger couldn't top.

Sen. Ostmeier, a two-term incumbent, ran well across the revamped district. He carried Hays and Ellis County, new to the

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SAM DIETER/Colby Free Press

Nic Schroeder (above) signed in to vote in the gym at the Community Building on Tuesday afternoon for the primary election.

Other voters (below) turned in their ballots; voting went on from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m.

Clerk beats out challenger

By Sam Dieter

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County Clerk Shelly Harms won by a landslide in Tuesday's Republican primary, keeping her job with 1,158 votes as opposed to the 292 for challenger Cindi Kriss.

Harms knows she will go back to work as the clerk next year, since there is no Democratic challenger this November.

"I haven't slept in the last couple weeks," Harms said. "I'm so excited right now, I don't know if I'm going to be able to sleep tonight."

Harms has been the county clerk for eight years. She won the seat in November 2004 from incumbent democrat Tracey Perkins, and was unopposed in the 2008 election.

Still, she said, she took the run by Kriss seriously.

"I'd be silly to say I was not concerned about it," Harms said. "That's why I was campaigning as



hard as I could."

Harms added that she would like to thank her family, friends and co-workers for their support.

Kriss is the senior accounts payable clerk at Colby Community College.

"Well, I knew that it was going to be pretty hard to beat an incum-

bent," Kriss said when she learned of the results.

She declined to comment further, except to say that she would keep working at the college.

The county clerk is in charge of carrying out elections, but also serves as the secretary for the Board of County Commissioners,

does accounts payable and payroll for all county departments, compiles budgets from the county, cities and school districts and prepares tax levies and financial reports for the county, among other duties.

Turnout is heavy here

Thomas County voters turned out in large numbers for a primary election Tuesday, with 1,665 people casting ballots out of 4,337 registered voters, or 38 percent of the total.

County Clerk Shelly Harms, who serves as the county's election officer, said workers counted 1,473 Republican ballots out of 2,260 registered and 192 from Democrats out of 683.

Thomas County voted with the rest of the district for the state Senate but voters here backed their state representative against a winning bid by another incumbent from St. Francis.

They settled the race for county clerk between Harms, the incumbent, and Cindi Kriss, who works at Colby Community College. Harms won with 1,158 votes over Kriss' 292.

Sheriff Rod Taylor piled up 1,217 votes in the Republican primary election on Tuesday. David A. Rodriguez, a former sheriff's deputy, received just 125 in the Democratic primary.

Thomas County Attorney Kevin N. Berens received 964 votes on the Republican ballot. His opponent, Margaret P. Mahoney of Oakley, got 453.

Most other candidates ran unopposed and have no opponents in the fall. Republican Paul M. Steele will continue to be the county commissioner in District No. 2, scoring 425 votes, and Republican Mike Baughn has clear sailing in District No. 3, totaling 397 votes.

Lora L. Volk received 1,394 votes for register of deeds while Layn Bruggeman got 1,314 unopposed for treasurer.

State legislative races for the

primary heated up for northwest Kansas voters when two popular incumbents had to run against one another. Redistricting maps drawn by federal judges earlier this summer put them together in the 120th District.

It was a close race between Republicans Richard "Rick" Billinger of Goodland and Ward M. Cassidy of St. Francis, with Billinger winning in Thomas County by 126 votes. Billinger claimed 653 votes and Cassidy 527.

In the district at large, however, the result was reversed and Cassidy will represent Colby and the northwest part of the county. The rest of the county went into District 118, where Rep. Don Hineman of Dighton got 213 votes unopposed.

In the 40th Senate District, Republican Sen. Ralph Ostmeier won the Republican primary with 965 votes in Thomas County. Republican John E. Miller finished behind him with 483 votes while Democrat Allen Clark Schmidt had just 157 votes.

The district judge for District No. 15, Division No. 1 will continue to be Republican Glenn D. Schiffner, who won his home county with 1,138 votes. Republican Todd R. Stramel, who withdrew from the race after ballots were set, got 291.

Other state candidates ran unopposed. For U.S. representative in the 1st District, Republican Rep. Tim Huelskamp got 1,333 votes.

The district judge for Division No. 2, Republican Scott Showalter of Goodland, got 1,289 votes, and the District Magistrate for District No. 15, Republican Richard "Rick" Ress drew 1,362.

Accountant wins nod for ed board seat

By John Hanna

AP Political Writer

TOPEKA — A member of a Salina-area school board is the Democratic nominee for the state Board of Education seat for northeast and north-central Kansas, while a retired Wichita school administrator will represent another district.

Carol Viar, of Salina, had 53

percent of the vote in Tuesday's primary race in the 6th District. She defeated Usha Reddi, a first-grade teacher from Manhattan.

Viar, an accountant and a Presbyterian lay minister, serves on the Southeast of Saline school board. She will face former state Rep. Deena Horst, a Salina Republican,

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Former editor takes second place in newspaper association contest

Former editor Kevin Bottrell won second place in feature writing in the National Newspaper Association's Better Newspapers Contest for a story he wrote last year while editor of the

Colby Free Press.

The contest, held each year to honor the best work in community newspapers, drew 1,954 entries from daily and weekly newspapers, with 525 awards won by 135 papers.

The article — which appeared in the paper Feb. 11, 2011 — chronicled the

experiences of Charles Cook, a Colby man who was a technical sergeant in the Army Air Corps during World War II.

"Mr. Cook came in to see me one day," said Bottrell, now general manager of *The Goodland Star-News*.

"We got to talking about his experi-

ences during the war. It was fascinating how clear his memories were 67 years later. I have a particular interest in World War II, and I make a point to interview anyone I can who is a veteran."

Cook, who was the flight engineer and manned one of the machine gun

turrets on a B-17 bomber, recalled his missions over France and Germany, the time he shot down a German fighter plane and the time he and his crew crashed and were picked up by actor Jimmy Stewart, then a colonel in the

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Kevin Bottrell

