Rush Holt victorious; wins by wide margin

By Laura Sass
Executive Editor

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Rush Holt, the Democratic incumbent for the 12th district in New Jersey, had to fight his way through crowds of supporters on Tuesday night at his victory celebration at the Marriott Hotel and Conference Center in Trenton.

Holt, who is currently serving his second consecutive term in the House of Representatives, represents Lawrence and Rider. He won the election by a wide margin, receiving 78,119 votes, or 64 percent, while his main opponent, DeForest “Buster” Soaries, received only 41,209 votes, or 34 percent, according to the Associated Press.

His other opponents received far less support. Green Party candidate Carl Mayer had 1,458 votes, Libertarian candidate Thomas D. Abrams received 831, and N.J. Conservative party candidate Karen Anne Zalewski received only 510 votes.

At 8 p.m., when the polls closed, Holt’s supporters began to gather at the Marriott Hotel. The crowd grew larger and louder as the election results started to come through.

“It’s actually a relatively small crowd,” said Silvia Temmer, a Holt supporter. “The district was expanded this year so many of the people who would normally come to support him were not able to make the trip.”

The 12th district now includes 37 more towns and parts of six others in Hunterdon, Mercer, Middlesex, Monmouth and Somerset counties. It had already included much of Hunterdon county and parts of the others.

Holt had no problem with the change; he was actually much more successful in this election. In 1998 he only barely beat Mike Pappas, the democratic candidate, and in 2000 it took weeks for Holt to be named the winner, due to several recounts, according to the 12th District of New Jersey website. He only won by 651 votes. This year was very different. Holt enjoyed an early lead on Tuesday and kept it. By 9:45 p.m., he was delivering his victory speech to an excited crowd.

“It is on behalf of all of you and all of your hard work that I accept this,” Holt declared. “From the time I started running for office, I wanted to restore a sense of trust and representation in self-government. The results tonight prove to me that it is working.”

Soaries, who had called Holt a few minutes earlier to concede, spoke to his supporters at the Hilton Hotel in East Brunswick.

“Everyone at the first Baptist Church voted for me, and I got three other votes besides that,” joked Soaries, a former associate minister, in his concession speech, according to The Trentonian.

Just a few days before the election, Holt was subjected to a surprise attack, funded by the national and state republican committees, according to The Trentonian Times. Masses of fliers were distributed that attacked Holt’s voting record. Holt issued a news statement condemning the nature of the literature.

Holt and Soaries had many opposing viewpoints, according to the Rush Holt website and the Buster Soaries for Congress website.

Holt voted against authorizing military action to eliminate weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. Soaries supports the majority of Congress and Bush in the position against Iraq.

Holt and Soaries are both strongly against privatization of Social Security. Soaries contends that flag desecration should be made illegal by law, while Holt voted against that proposal. Holt called Bush’s economic plan “irresponsible” and voted against making tax cuts permanent, while Soaries supports the tax reductions and wants to see them continue.

Holt opposes the death penalty in general, while Soaries supports the use of it for terrorists, hijackers and kidnappers, as well as others covered under federal law.

Holt made mention of some of these issues and others in his victory speech.

“We know that schools should be for all children. We know that health care should be for everyone,” Holt said. “There is too much attention given to privatization, including Social Security and Medicare. This is not the prescription for the American dream. We will be great not by going around saying ‘Every person for himself’ or ‘Every person for herself,’ but we will succeed by helping each other.”

Holt also emphasized the importance of participating in self-government.

Shirley Turner, associate director of Career Services at Rider University who was present at Holt’s victory party and a State Senator, agreed.

“Getting involved is important,” Turner said. “This is all part of the Rider community, and participating is important, not only for demonstrators, but for students as well.”

Dr. Charles Richardson, a professor of history at Rider, was pleased about the turnout.

“I think that Rider is well-represented here,” he said.

Holt, throughout the night, kept emphasizing one point over and over again.

“Winning an election is not an end in itself,” he said. “It’s about bringing ideas from you to your government so you will have the representation that you deserve. The work has just begun.”

Lautenberg wins despite fierce criticisms

By Roger Alvarado
Staff Writer

Unfazed by criticism of his late selection and advanced age, New Jersey voters returned Democrat Frank Lautenberg to the United States Senate for a fourth term Tuesday night.

The 78-year-old Lautenberg, a last-minute replacement for embattled Senator Robert Torricelli, soundly defeated Republican Douglas Forrester who had just weeks earlier enjoyed a double-digit lead against Lautenberg to the United States Senate for a fourth term in New Jersey. Holt won the election by a wide margin, receiving 78,119 votes, or 64 percent, to Forrester’s 882,292 votes, or 44 percent.

Lautenberg, who retired in 2000, was hastily cast back into New Jersey’s political spotlight in September when Forrester had taken a commanding margin over Torricelli in state public opinion polls. Torricelli’s problems stemmed from allegations that he accepted illegal gifts and donations from businessman David Chang. He was severely admonished by the Senate Ethics Committee on July 30 and his stock plummeted after a federal appeals court found allegations against him highly credible.

As Forrester’s seemingly insurmountable lead increased, Torricelli pulled the plug on his campaign Sept. 30, leaving Democrats scrambling to find a viable replacement.

Though the deadline for parties to change candidates had passed, Lautenberg announced he would seek election. As a result of the state Supreme Court’s decision to approve his candidacy and the U.S. Supreme Court’s refusal to hear the case, he was cleared to enter the race.

According to Dr. Frank Rusciano, chairman of the political science department, parties have a right to nominate a new candidate if one withdraws, without the fear of facing state intervention.

“The actual issue in New Jersey was whether Lautenberg’s name could appear on the ballot,” said Rusciano. “With reference to that, it is really a matter of whether there is time to get out new ballots and who would pay for them. The courts decided that it was more important to have a competitive election than to worry about timing. The only issue had to do with logistics than fairness, for it is always fair for a party to substitute candidates— they are the ones that nominate candidates in the first place.”

In winning, Lautenberg preserved his party’s 30-year dominance in U.S. Senate elections in New Jersey. The Republicans have not won a Senate race in the state since the late Sen. Clifford Case’s election in 1972.

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