

Victory surprises new Calaveras supervisor

The Record

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ANGELS CAMP -- Forget about the convincing margin of victory Steve Wilensky built en route to defeating David Studley for the District 2 seat on the Calaveras County Board of Supervisors.

Wilensky, frankly, was surprised he won at all.

The 53-year-old Glencoe farmer said Wednesday that Studley's vigorous campaign, which included major endorsements from key local officials, made his victory -- let alone his 16-point margin -- seem unlikely.

Three board members -- including outgoing District 2 Supervisor Paul Stein -- Sheriff Dennis Downum, District Attorney Jeffrey Tuttle and even some state officials backed Studley, a Mountain Ranch attorney.

"Just about everything that moves around here had mobilized to the other side, and we thought that might have been determinative," said Wilensky, who operates a fruit and cider farm.

"But we had a grass-roots effort that seems to have been broader and deeper than I might have guessed."

It certainly was deeper than most election observers could have guessed. Downum, who was Studley's campaign co-chairman, knew his candidate had a major hole from which to climb, given that Wilensky captured nearly 48 percent of the vote in the March primary.

But Downum said Wednesday that Studley backers figured "we'd close it a little more than that." :::

Stein, Studley's other campaign co-chairman, said he was shocked by the final numbers and thought it would come down to a few dozen votes.

"I was really surprised there was that much momentum for Steve. But he ran a good campaign. He had a lot of passion and a burning desire to be supervisor -- and he is," said Stein, who is stepping down after two terms to pursue other opportunities.

Wilensky, 53, a retired union official, takes office in January along with fellow Supervisor-elect Bill Claudino, who ran unopposed in District 1.

Studley said he was disappointed in what he called a landslide victory for Wilensky, who took 58 percent of the vote to Studley's 42 percent, because he felt he got his message out to voters during a heated campaign that saw the two candidates raise nearly \$100,000 between them.

"I thought there was more support for the approach I took to confronting the problems we have," Studley said. "But obviously, people by a strong margin agreed with Steve."

Wilensky said he'll have no problems working with the two remaining board members who contributed to his opponent's campaign: Tom Tryon and Victoria Erickson.

None of the other major races in Calaveras County changed overnight Tuesday, at least based on final results that won't become official until after the county completes its election canvass process.

The election attracted more than 76 percent of the county's registered voters, and more than 43 percent of those who voted did so by absentee ballot.

In the race for three Angels Camp City Council seats, appointed incumbents William Hutchinson and Lee Seaton prevailed along with newcomer Norman Price.

Incumbents Jennifer Eltringham, Joey Toney and Diane Bateman retained their seats on the Mark Twain Union Elementary School District Board of Trustees. Incumbent Calaveras County Board of Education Trustee Kathy Huebert also won.

In the Calaveras Unified School District, challenger Sherri Reusche unseated longtime incumbent James Foltz in Trustee Area 1.

In Trustee Area 3, incumbent John Yerman held a slim lead over challenger Jason Simons.

It's not known if the outstanding provisional ballots could change that outcome. Elections official Deborah Smith said she did not know how many provisional ballots remained to be counted during the canvassing.

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