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TOP STORY

ELECTION 2022

## Republican Van Drew wins, Democrat Alexander leads in CD2 primary race

Michelle Brunetti Post

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Election day in Egg Harbor Township Bargaintown Vol. Fire Co. Tuesday June 7, 2022. Edward Lea Staff Photographer / Press of Atlantic City

Edward Lea, Staff Photographer

Michelle Brunetti Post

**A**s expected, the two candidates backed by their respective party organizations were leading their 2nd Congressional District primary contests Tuesday, with incumbent U.S. Rep. Jeff Van Drew, R-2nd, far ahead of his two opponents and the certain winner.

Van Drew credited former President Donald Trump for his strong showing. He captured more than 90% of ballots cast in Atlantic County.

“I would like to personally thank President Trump for his endorsement and the tens of thousands of America First Conservatives across South Jersey who have ... entrusted me to be their standard-bearer in the fight for a strong America and a strong South Jersey,” Van Drew said in a press release late Tuesday.

On the Democratic side, civil rights attorney and former law enforcement officer Tim Alexander, of Galloway Township, was leading in a tighter race, capturing about 60% of the votes reported in most of the counties. Alexander had more than 70% of the votes counted in Atlantic County.

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But his opponent, Carolyn Rush, was leading 60% to Alexander's 40% in Gloucester County, the only county in which she and Alexander shared the support of Democratic party committee members and the "county line."

It was a fairly low-turnout election, as only party stalwarts tend to vote in primaries — especially when there are few primary contests on the ballot, as was the case this year.

“The general election begins now, though,” said John Froomjian, executive director of the William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy at Stockton University.

Van Drew clearly pivoted to the general in another part of his statement.

“Whether it’s open borders, record high gas prices, crippling inflation, or surging violent crime, it’s been failure after failure with this Administration and Democrat majority,” Van Drew said.



**Van Drew primary opponent Pignatelli another new GOP member**

The November election is likely to garner much more interest from the public, as it will be part of the fight over which party controls Congress, Froomjian predicted.

The second congressional district covers all of Atlantic, Cape May, Cumberland and Salem counties and parts of Gloucester and Ocean counties.

Van Drew, of Dennis Township, was leading with 80% to above 90% of the vote at about 10 p.m. with a majority of districts reporting.

Republican opponents Sean Pignatelli, of Downe Township, and John Barker, of Berkeley Township, split 10% to 20% of the vote.

Van Drew had the endorsement of all six county party committees in the district.



**Democratic 2nd Congressional District primary opponents mirror Obama/Clinton race that brought them into party**

In the other five counties, Alexander had the committees' support and the advantage of running on the "county line" as the party's choice.

Rush, an engineer from Sea Isle City, got a late start in the race but garnered attention and a following, with plenty of lawn signs around the region.

It's not surprising that turnout was low or that Alexander and Van Drew were winning in the district, Froomjian said.

“Primaries in New Jersey are really party functions,” said Froomjian. “It’s an election in which the party nominates its standard bearer.”

To vote in one, registered voters must declare membership in a party.

“Anyone who wants to remain unaffiliated is not going to vote in a primary. Even the turnout of party registrants is very low,” Froomjian said. “Typically those active in the party’s county organization or who follow politics closely and strongly identify with one of the parties are the ones who vote, and they tend to follow organizational endorsements.”



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Froonjian said the sleepy primary will morph into a vigorous general election in November, as that election will be more nationalized.

“Whatever party voters want to see control Congress will motivate voters more than the individual candidates running,” Froonjian said.



Van Drew

Edward Lea, Staff Photographer

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