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TOP STORY

Kennedy looks to unify Democrats against Van Drew after tough primary

MICHELLE BRUNETTI POST Staff Writer
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Amy Kennedy, center, greets supporter William Hughes Jr., left, at her victory party Tuesday night. Hughes is the son of the late former U.S. Rep. Bill Hughes, a Democrat who served in the House from 1975 to 1995.

MICHELLE BRUNETTI POST Staff Writer

NORTHFIELD — Likely Democratic nominee for the 2nd Congressional District Amy Kennedy, of Brigantine, is ready to mend fences after a heated primary election.

The party needs to be strong to defeat U.S. Rep. Jeff Van Drew, R-2nd, Kennedy said at a victory party Tuesday night at her headquarters.

“The first step is going to be about pulling together support — making sure the Democratic Party is unified for what will be a tough race,” she said of November’s general election against the freshman congressman. “I will make sure I reach out to people not with me in the beginning of this race.”

With about half of the more than 60,000 vote-by-mail ballots cast districtwide counted by midday Wednesday, Kennedy had about 65% of the vote to Brigid Callahan Harrison’s 26% and Will Cunningham’s 12%.

Kennedy had absorbed many attacks from her strongest opponent, Longport’s Harrison, who conceded the election minutes after the close of polls.

The attacks prepared her well for the race against Van Drew, Kennedy said.





Harrison concedes to Kennedy in a surprising twist to 2nd District Democratic primary

“That’s what primaries are for,” Kennedy said. “It’s definitely been helpful to sharpen my own stance and prepare me for what’s coming.”

“We are where I thought we would be,” Van Drew, who beat his primary opponent, Bob Patterson of Ocean City, handily with more than 80% of the vote, said of Kennedy winning the Democratic primary.

He said he will stress the differences in vision between him and Kennedy.

“What my campaign is going to be about is a strong America, strong military, energy production, strong borders and education,” Van Drew said. “And a strong supply chain.”

In a concession video, Harrison said she wanted to coalesce the party to defeat Van Drew.

Harrison had gone after Kennedy regarding her husband, Patrick Kennedy's donation of \$500,000 to a super political action committee that financed \$75,000 in attack ads against Harrison, after Amy Kennedy had promised not to self-fund her campaign. She also criticized other aspects of Kennedy's campaign and family finances.

Kennedy said she had spoken to both Harrison and Cunningham, of Vineland, who based on the earliest results placed a distant third. Kennedy said both candidates were gracious and generous in their remarks to her.

She had not yet heard from state Senate President Steve Sweeney, she said, who supported Harrison, but hoped to talk to him soon.



Some voters insist on going to polls despite vote-by-mail election

On Wednesday, Sweeney released a statement on Kennedy's win.

“The democratic process must be respected, and our goal remains the same — and that is to defeat Jeff Van Drew and elect Joe Biden president of the United States,” Sweeney said. “I congratulate Amy and look forward to her victory in November.”

John Foonjian, executive director of the William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy at Stockton University, called Kennedy’s win “an impressive victory throughout South Jersey.”

“Looking at the numbers, Kennedy won in every county,” Foonjian said. “The only ones even a little close were Camden and Gloucester, but Kennedy still won by double digits in Norcross and Sweeney territory.”

George Norcross is a political powerbroker based in Camden County, and Sweeney’s home county is Gloucester. Both had supported Harrison, who had the coveted county line in six of eight counties in the district. That put her name under Biden’s for president and U.S. Sen. Cory Booker, both of whom won their contests.

“In Cumberland and Cape May, there was a 20-to-30-point spread. It’s very early in Atlantic County, but the numbers even now are unbelievably lopsided,” Foonjian said.

Kennedy and many of her supporters said they were surprised by Harrison’s early concession.

“I knew it could be a longer process, and I was prepared for that,” Kennedy said. “I’m grateful to be able to focus on the general election.”

Van Drew ignited Democrats’ ire when he switched to the Republican Party after voting against impeaching President Donald Trump, amassing a crowded field of opponents.



Harrison renews request for federal monitoring of primary in Atlantic County

Some contenders had already dropped out, leaving five Democratic candidates in the race Tuesday night. In addition to Kennedy, Harrison and Cunningham, the two others were West Cape May Commissioner John Francis and retired FBI agent Robert Turkavage, of Brigantine.

Kennedy celebrated Tuesday night at her headquarters in Northfield with family, friends and Gov. Phil Murphy and his wife, Tammy.

“I can’t believe we won the lottery here in South Jersey,” Murphy said, calling Kennedy a “bona fide fourth-generation Jersey Girl.”

Kennedy said Murphy made the decision to drive down from his home in Monmouth County after hearing Harrison had conceded just minutes after the polls closed at 8 p.m.



Cunningham says media bias 'muzzled' him in Democratic primary

Some politicians had seen the race as a proxy fight between Murphy and the South Jersey political machine run by Norcross and Sweeney, both of whom are considered foes of Murphy.

The gathering was held in the parking lot of the campaign offices on New Road, near the produce store owned by Assemblyman Vince Mazzeo, D-Atlantic, who supported Harrison.

Everyone wore a mask, but it was difficult for all to stay 6 feet apart, especially as just about all attendees seemed to want a photo with the presumed winner.

NJ Primary Results 2020

County	Race	Candidate	Party	Votes
Atlantic City	Mayor	Marty Small	D	1,717

County	Race	Candidate	Party	Votes
Atlantic City	Mayor	Pamela Thomas-Fields	D	948
Atlantic City	Mayor	James Whitehead	D	138
Atlantic City	Mayor	Thomas Forkin	R	296
Atlantic County	Sheriff	Eric Scheffler	D	3,588
Atlantic County	Sheriff	Joseph O'Donoghue	R	4,251
Atlantic County	Surrogate	Stephen Dicht	D	2,922
Atlantic County	Surrogate	Levi Fox	D	650
Atlantic County	Surrogate	James Curcio	R	4,295
Atlantic County	Freeholder	Caren Fitzpatrick	D	3,458
Atlantic County	Freeholder	Celeste Fernandez	D	3,462
Atlantic County	Freeholder	John Risley Jr	R	4,339
Atlantic County	Freeholder	James Toto	R	4,204
Atlantic County	Freeholder D3	Andrew Parker	R	990
Atlantic County	Freeholder D3	Thelma Witherspoon	D	460
Barnegat Township	Township Committee	Alfonso Cirulli	R	1,668
Barnegat Township	Township Committee	Joseph Marte	R	1,662
Barnegat Township	Township Committee	Charles Cunliffe	D	1,644
Barnegat Township	Township Committee	Peggy Houle	D	1,691
Cape May County	Freeholder	Elizabeth Casey	D	5,504
Cape May County	Freeholder	Brendan Sciarra	D	5,285
Cape May County	Freeholder	Will Morey	R	6,624
Cape May County	Freeholder	Jeffrey Pierson	R	6,535
Lacey Township	Township Committee	Nicholas Juliano	R	1,980
Lacey Township	Township Committee	Bill Stemmler	D	1,286
Lakewood	Township Committee	Michael D'Elia	R	4,805
Lakewood	Township Committee	Hector Fuentes	R	4,632
Lakewood	Township Committee	Harold Herskowitz	R	1,391

County	Race	Candidate	Party	Votes
Lakewood	Township Committee	Ray Coles	D	2,110
Lakewood	Township Committee	Mordy Gross	D	1,977
Little Egg Harbor	Township Committee	Ray Gormley	R	1,632
Little Egg Harbor	Township Committee	John Kehm	R	1,603
Little Egg Harbor	Township Committee	Gabriel Franco	D	1,273
Little Egg Harbor	Township Committee	Shaun Moran	D	1,264
Lower Township	Mayor	Christopher South	D	1,323
Lower Township	Mayor	Frank Sippel	R	1,455
Middle Township	Township Committee	Bob Jackson	D	987
Middle Township	Township Committee	Timothy Donohue	R	1,091
Ocean County	County Clerk	Scott Colabella	R	39,146
Ocean County	County Clerk	Kathy Russell	D	31,413
Ocean County	Freeholder	Joe Vicari	R	38,731
Ocean County	Freeholder	Helen Dela Cruz	D	31,398
Ocean Township	Township Committee	Ken Boulderstone	R	1,019
Ocean Township	Township Committee	Rita Kopacz	D	567

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In my first job after college got paid to read the New York Times and summarize articles for an early online data base. First reporting job was with The Daily Record in Parsippany. I have also worked in nonprofits, and have been with The Press since 1990.