

Democrat Bob Romano seeks recount after losing Texas House District 105 race

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The fight for Texas House District 105 isn't over.

As expected, Democratic challenger Bob Romano said Tuesday afternoon that he plans to seek a recount in his bid for the seat that covers most of Irving. He trailed three-term Republican incumbent Linda Harper-Brown by only 20 votes after all provisional and overseas votes were accepted Monday.

Ms. Harper-Brown's tight victory maintained her party's one-seat edge in the chamber. The race, which also included Libertarian James G. Baird, was too close to call for days and garnered statewide attention because the winner is likely to determine the balance of power in the state House. But Irving residents have their own views on what the razor-thin difference means.

Mr. Romano's supporters say the results should serve as a wake-up call to Ms. Harper-Brown because more than half of voters cast ballots for her opponents. But Ms. Harper-Brown's supporters say Democrats fired up by what became President-elect Barack Obama's historic victory nearly cost an effective leader the re-election she deserves.

"The people in Irving may not know everything she's involved in," said Richard Lindsay, who serves on several Irving boards and commissions and supports Ms. Harper-Brown.

Ms. Harper-Brown said Tuesday that she stands by her voting record. She, too, thinks new voters energized by Mr. Obama's campaign didn't take the time to get to know candidates down the ballot.

"I believe that I have done everything the taxpayers of Irving have asked me to do," she said. "I have no problem with any vote I have taken in the House. I can explain every one of them."

Ms. Harper-Brown also said that while she ran what she called a positive campaign, her opponent twisted truths and slung mud to misrepresent her and her voting record.

Mr. Romano, a former Irving City Council member, declined to answer questions Tuesday about the looming recount or Ms. Harper-Brown's assessment of his campaign.

Former Irving Mayor Marvin Randle, who supported Mr. Romano in the election, said his candidate's near-win was a combination of several factors, including straight-ticket

voters. But Mr. Randle also believes that many voters were alienated by their sitting representative. The results should serve as a wake-up call, he said.

"Linda's not that well thought of if you talk to the rank and file," he said.

Dallas County Elections Administrator Bruce Sherbet said it will probably be next week before a recount is completed. He said that rarely do recounts result in a different outcome – even those with fewer than 20 votes separating candidates.

"You can't qualify votes in a recount. You just count the votes as they were counted in an election," Mr. Sherbet said.

On Monday, as provisional and overseas ballots were examined for their validity, Republicans accused a Democratic ballot board judge of accepting illegal votes. The judge denied the accusations.

Democrats, meanwhile, accused their counterparts of laying the groundwork for contesting the results.

Once the recount is complete, the losing candidate could contest the election. That would leave the race's outcome up to House members when the Legislature convenes in January. The House would decide whether particular votes were counted legally and could rule that the outcome was correct, incorrect or void it and order another election.

Before he announced his plans to seek a recount, Mr. Romano said early Tuesday that he wanted to do what's right for voters in the district. But he wouldn't discuss how far he might take his fight.

"I want to make sure all the options we have on the table have been addressed properly," he said.