

Pfaff declares victory in 32nd SD; win would prevent Republicans from reaching two-thirds majority

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Former DATCP Secretary Brad Pfaff early this morning declared victory in his race against former GOP state Sen. Dan Kapanke in an open western Wisconsin state Senate seat.

If the win holds up, it would ensure Dems prevent Republicans from reaching a veto-proof majority in the state Senate.

With all precincts reporting, Pfaff was at 50.3 percent, while Kapanke was at 49.7 percent. The difference was 594 votes, according to unofficial returns. Four years ago, Kapanke lost a bid to retake his old seat by 61 votes.

Republicans needed to net three seats in the chamber to reach the 22 votes needed to override Gov. Tony Evers' veto without needing Dem support.

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They were in strong position in the open 30th SD held by the retiring Sen Dave Hansen, D-Green Bay. With less than half of the vote in, Green Bay attorney Eric Wimberger was above 60 percent, though large swaths of the Brown County vote were still out.

And Sen. Patty Schachtner, D-Somerset, conceded to state Rep. Rob Stafsholt, R-New Richmond in their northwestern Wisconsin race.

Meanwhile, GOP Sens. Alberta Darling, of River Hills, and Pat Testin, of Stevens Point, had significant leads with most of the vote in.

Testin declared victory after unofficial results showed him winning with 56.5 percent over former police officer Paul Piotrowski.

A WisPolitics.com tally of spending in the race found Piotrowski and the groups backing him had spent \$1.1 million through late last week compared to less than \$580,000 by Testin and the groups backing him.

Testin noted the spending disparity in the race.

“Tonight’s victory is a triumph of record over rhetoric, and I’m thrilled at the opportunity the people have given me to continue getting real results,” Testin said.

It was Kapanke’s second bid to reclaim his old seat that he lost in a 2011 recall election. Four years ago, he fell short in a rematch with then-state Sen. Jennifer Shilling, D-La Crosse, by 61 votes. After she decided against seeking reelection and then resigned the seat, Kapanke faced Pfaff in a rematch of a 2004 race that the owner of the La Crosse Loggers won by more than 5 points.

But Pfaff had a more than 2-to-1 spending advantage this fall, according to a WisPolitics.com check of independent expenditure reports, candidate spending and media buys tracked by Advertising Analytics. Pfaff and his supporters had spent almost \$1.8 million through late last week, while Kapanke and his backers spent nearly \$900,000.