

Johnson becomes Milwaukee's first elected Black mayor

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Cavalier Johnson on Tuesday became Milwaukee's first elected Black mayor in the city's 176-year history.

With all precincts reporting, Johnson had 62,143 votes, or 71.7 percent, to 24,543, or 28.3 percent, for former Ald. Bob Donovan.

During his victory speech, Johnson said his win begins a long road to make Milwaukee the best city in America by tackling rising violent crime, creating family-supporting jobs and addressing all residents' concerns.

He said he's proud to take the position, but he didn't run in order to become the city's first elected Black mayor.

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"Let's be real though, the symbolism isn't lost on me," he said. "And it shouldn't be lost on anybody in this room. This is an important moment in our city's history. So I hope that all the Black and Brown boys and girls wake up tomorrow, and when they get ready for school, they do so knowing that what we have shown here today, that no matter where you live, or how much or how little your parents make, and no matter the color of your skin, that in Milwaukee there's a place for you too."

Johnson is the second Black mayor of Milwaukee, but he's the first to be elected to the post.

Marvin Pratt, who's Black, became acting mayor nearly two decades ago after John Norquist left the post. But Pratt lost his bid for the job in 2004 to Tom Barrett, who won with 54 percent of the vote.

Barrett then won the next four mayoral elections before stepping down in December after accepting President Joe Biden's nomination to be the U.S. ambassador to Luxembourg. That elevated Johnson, president of the Common Council, to acting mayor.

Donovan in his concession speech said there's no shame in pursuing one's dream and coming up short.

"I thank all of you and wish the best for Milwaukee, and I wish we would've had a little better results," he said. "But it is what it is. There's one thing I've learned in politics. There's no participation trophies. You either win or you lose. Well, we took it on the chin tonight, but boy oh boy we're not down."