

Republican Melotik wins 24th AD special election

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Republican Paul Melotik, an Ozaukee County supervisor from Grafton, won a special election for the 24th AD Tuesday night, topping retired Dem engineer Bob Tatterson.

According to unofficial results posted at clerks' websites, Melotik had 6,455 votes, or 53.6 percent, to Tatterson's 5,568.

The results in the rare July special election were closer than the typical performance for the heavily Republican seat. U.S. Sen. Ron Johnson, R-Oshkosh, took 60 percent of the vote in the district last fall while winning statewide by 1 percent.

Melotik's victory pushes the GOP majority in the Assembly back to 64-35, and he told WisPolitics he expects to seek a full term in 2024.

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He said a full campaign would allow him to get to know voters better, bemoaning ads that he said falsely portrayed him as extreme.

One Tatterson digital spot on Facebook called Melotik "dangerously out of touch, disturbingly extreme." The narrator charged Melotik wants to ban abortions even in cases of rape and incest and would jail doctors that "perform life-saving reproductive care."

Assembly Republicans were already planning to kickstart Melotik's fundraising for the 2024 cycle ahead of Tuesday's vote. They sent an invite July 7 for a \$500-a-head breakfast fundraiser next week ahead of the caucus' golf outing in the Wisconsin Dells.

“I hope to meet more of the voters and have them understand what I’m really about,” Melotik said of a run next year. “It’s not about the things they saw in those ads.”

The seat opened up this spring after Republican Dan Knodl, who had represented the district since 2009, won a special election for the 8th SD.

Tatterson, who got 38.8 percent of the vote last fall while challenging Knodl, outraised Melotik nearly 3-to-1 through July 3, pulling in \$103,612. Still, Melotik got \$19,736 in late in-kind donations from RACC and the state GOP.

No groups filed independent expenditure reports with the state head of yesterday’s election, meaning the campaign was largely a matchup of both caucuses working doors in the GOP district.

Tatterson didn’t immediately respond to a message left on his cell phone seeking comment. He posted on Facebook that he was rooting for Melotik’s success “even though we may disagree on how to address some issues facing our district and state.”

“Our loss in this election does not mean that I will be leaving the fight for the values I believe in,” Tatterson wrote. “I still believe the best days of our state are ahead of us. I will do everything in my power to continue to work towards that future.”