

Persell outlasts Carlson in 4A; Sailer, Howes re-elected  
Brad Swenson  
Bemidji Pioneer - 11/05/2008

Minnesota House 4A stayed in Democrat hands, and might possibly help give the DFL a supermajority in the House, in Tuesday's election.

John Persell, an environmental policy analyst for the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe, won with a 52 percent edge over Republican John Carlson's 44 percent. Persell had 10,259 votes to Carlson's 8,666 votes.

Independent Party candidate Sharatin Blake was a distant third with 58 votes or 4 percent.

Persell took all five Bemidji city wards over Carlson, 525-395 in Ward 1, 571-350 in Ward 2, 936-720 in Ward 3, 624-473 in Ward 4 and 814-622 in Ward 5. Blake's biggest ward was Ward 3, where he got 60 votes.

Northern Township, a Republican stronghold, gave Carlson the nod, 1,301 to 968 in its No. 1 precinct and 120-96 in its No. 2 precinct.

Persell said he spent a lot of time Tuesday on the Bemidji State University campus encouraging students to vote. "I got a good response, the same I've been getting door-knocking, so I felt good about that," he said.

"I feel confident, and cautiously optimistic," Persell said as he enjoyed a piece of cake and cup of coffee during the Beltrami County DFL's victory party Tuesday night at the Hampton Inn & Suites.

Meanwhile, across town at the Beltrami County Republican Campaign Headquarters, Carlson, a Bemidji insurance agency owner, was also optimistic as he mixed with supporters and his family, who were clad in red "Carlson for House 4A" T-shirts.

"We had a lot of positive honks of the horn," Carlson said in an interview. Sign-carriers spent Tuesday morning at Irvine Avenue and Paul Bunyan Drive, and spent the afternoon by Lueken's.

"Lot and lot of waves and honks and thumbs up," Carlson said. "It makes you feel good, after you've put so much time in. We campaigned right up to the last hour, and I did pretty much right up to 7 o'clock."

Carlson admitted to having a case of butterflies about 5:30 p.m. as the realization of the end of the race became clear.

He's also hoping on ticket-splitters to put him over.

"I think there's a good 40 percent of the people in this district that are ticket splitters," the Republican said. "They just vote for the person who they think is the best person. I wish everyone would do that — I wish we had 100 percent ticket splitters. Vote for the person, don't just vote blindly for the party."

Carlson said his biggest concern was in how many votes Blake receiving, figuring on his Libertarian stance to pull off more Republican votes than Democrat.

Persell said he was pleased with the campaigns that he, Carlson and Blake ran, wishing the same were true for races higher on the ticket.

"We got our belly full in the Senate race," Persell said. "I'm very happy we (House 4A) we were able

to have a clean race and hope we can set a standard for other people to follow.

“This is Minnesota — this is what we should do,” he added.

The Democrat praised what he called “a tremendous turnout,” especially among new voters. He said large voter-turnouts were seen “at Leech Lake and Red Lake — that’s good for the country, it’s good for the state, and hopefully it will be good for me and good for Brita Sailer — those things are good news for me.”

Asked what the key issue was as voters headed to the polls, Persell said it was high property taxes.

“What I started with and kept going on throughout my race was property taxes,” Persell said. “I said I’m going to do something about this exorbitant rise in property taxes. That comes from my own tax statement and some of it from my time on the township board.”

It’s grass-roots issues, he said, including health care and education. “If I’m fortunate enough to win, it’s because people believe I can do something about it, that I’ll address the issues straightaway.”

Carlson also believes voters went to polls on bread-and-butter issues of House 4A — education, health care costs and higher ed tuition.

“The economy is worrisome to people,” Carlson said. “Schools at this level is a big issue because that’s where we really have an impact on, how do we change this funding formula to get it fixed so we’re not doing referendums.”

At BSU, Carlson said he’s heard about both tuition and administration. “Maybe we ought to have an investigation of MnSCU and why do we have higher tuition? It gets to be the holy grail and we don’t want to touch that.”

## House 2B

Rep. Brita Sailer, DFL-Park Rapids, handily won a third term facing the same opponent the third time, in unofficial final returns Tuesday night.

Sailer, will all 102 precincts reporting, captured 54 percent of the vote while former Rep. Doug Lindgren, R-Bagley, received 46 percent. Sailer had 10,773 votes while Lindgren received 9,117 votes.

Sailer’s biggest constituency continues to be the Red Lake Reservation, where she bested Lindgren, 833-36 at Red Lake, 598-29 at Redby, 342-16 at Ponemah and 341-11 at Little Rock.

It was Lindgren, however, in Turtle Lake Township, 406-387, in Eckles Township, 327-311, and Lammers Township, 168-112. Sailer took Grant Valley Township 497-472. They tied in Blackduck, 162-all.

Lindgren took his home of Bagley, 309-249, but lost Clearbrook to Sailer, 138-123.

## House 4B

Rep. Larry Howes, R- Walker, was headed to a sixth term as this edition went to press.

With 79 percent of the House 4B precincts reporting — 59 of 75 — Howes held 54 percent of the vote over Democrat Meg Bye’s 46 percent.

Howes had 10,857 votes to Bye's 9,171 votes at about 1:15 a.m. this morning.

Bye of Pequot Lakes, a former Duluth City Council member and human rights officer there, won in Howes' Walker home turf, 305-272, and took Hackensack, 117-83.

But Howes took in traditional Republican areas, winning in East Gull Lake 398-211, in Shingobee Township's most populous precinct, 485-359, and Crow Wing County's Ideal Township, 459-278, and won in Farden Township, 383-260.

It was also Howes in Laporte, 46-25, in Helga Township, 411-381, and Guthrie Township, 163-127. Bye won Nevis, 105-96, Lakeport Township, 262-231, and Akeley, 119-77.

[bswenson@bemidjipioneer.com](mailto:bswenson@bemidjipioneer.com)