

The FRONT PAGE

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Serving the Carolinas Gay & Lesbian Communities for Over Eighteen Years

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First Lesbian Elected To U.S. House

■ Tammy Baldwin wins, gay marriage loses.

By Paul Falduto
Staff Writer

Wisconsin, which made history in 1982 by passing the nation's first anti-discrimination law including sexual orientation, made history again Tuesday by electing the first-ever openly lesbian to Congress. But openly lesbian candidates lost in two other states while referenda opposing gay marriage easily passed in Alaska and Hawaii.

Wisconsin State Representative Tammy Baldwin (D), defeated former state insurance commissioner Josephine Musser (R) by a margin of 53-47% in the 2nd Congressional District. The seat is currently held by moderate Republican Scott Klug, who is retiring.

Baldwin also becomes the first openly gay non-incumbent to win a seat in Congress. The other four openly gay representatives, incumbents Barney Frank (D-MA) and Jim Kolbe (R-AZ), and former representatives Steve Gunderson (R-WI) and Gerry Studds (D-MA), all came out (or were outed) after they had been elected to Congress. Baldwin is also the first woman ever elected to Congress from Wisconsin.

Baldwin made health care a cornerstone of her campaign, saying the United States should adopt a national, publicly funded system like that in Canada.

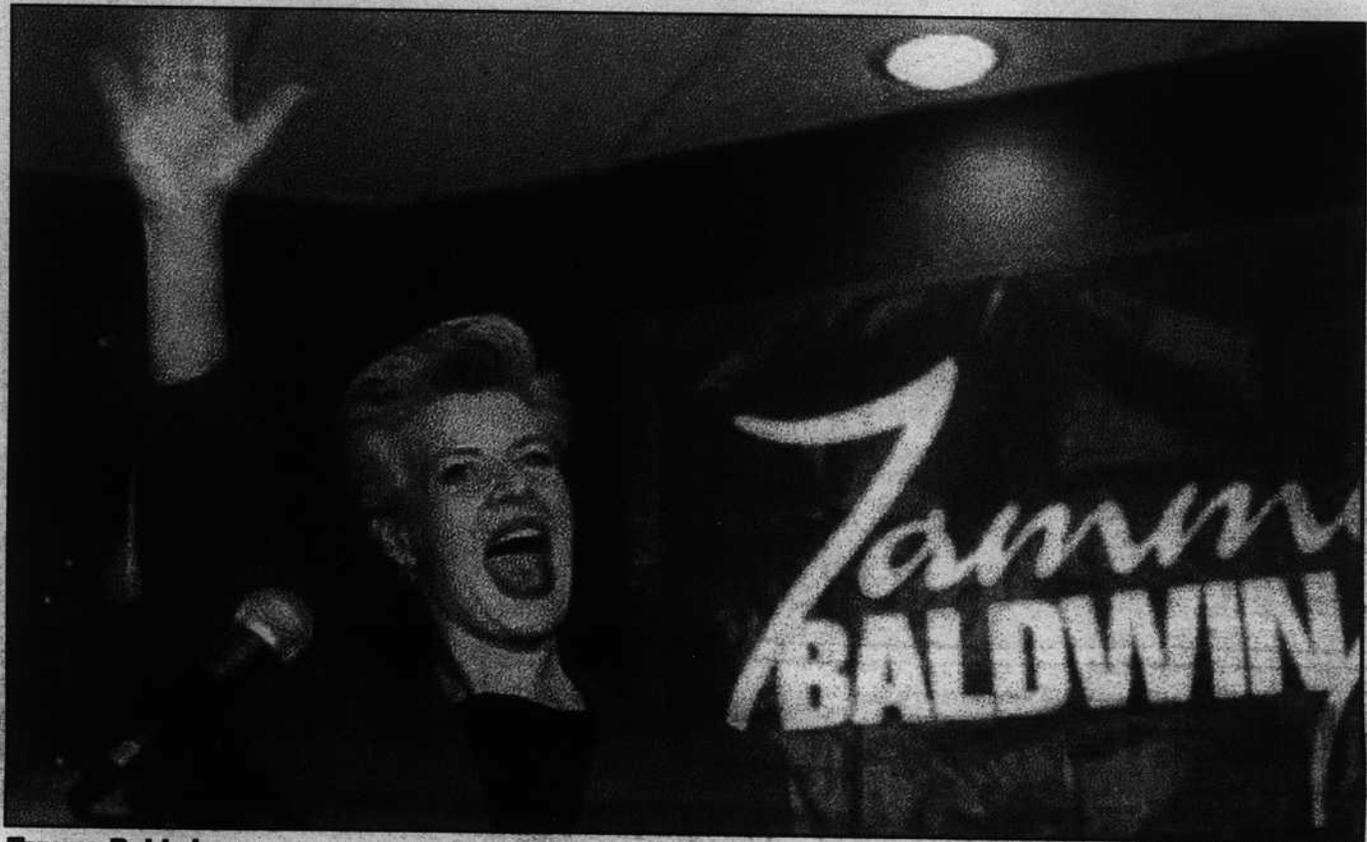
"Tammy Baldwin is a solid representative who happens to be a lesbian," said Elizabeth Birch, executive director of the Washington-based Human Rights Campaign, a gay rights group that helped bankroll the Baldwin campaign.

"She has broken down a very large door," Birch added. "She has created an arch of hope that future gay and lesbian candidates will be able to walk through."

In California's 49th District, open lesbian Christine Kehoe (D) fell about 4,000 votes short of defeating incumbent Republican Brian Bilbray. Kehoe is a Democratic city councilwoman who has sought to minimize sexual issues in her campaign against Bilbray, who agreed it was irrelevant. "People get in trouble when they try to make these very personal issues political issues," Bilbray said recently.

Bilbray, who was first elected in the Republican landslide of 1994, won re-election by over 22,000 votes two years ago — so Kehoe's performance was a significant improvement for the Democrats.

The third open lesbian candidate, retired army colonel Grethe Cammermeyer, lost to incumbent Jack Metcalf by a margin of 55-45%. This was a significant improvement for the Republican party, since Metcalf won re-election in the 1996 campaign by a mar-



Tammy Baldwin waves to supporters the day after defeating Republican candidate Josephine Musser in the 2nd Congressional District of Wisconsin. The Democrat is the first woman sent to Congress from Wisconsin.

(AP/Andy Maris)

gin of only 49-48%.

Cammermeyer, a political neophyte, gained national fame in 1992 when she was dismissed from her position as a colonel in the Army after disclosing her sexual orientation.

A federal judge later ordered her reinstated, and her battle was made into a made-for-television movie called *Serving in Silence* that starred Glenn Close as Cammermeyer.

Good News in the Carolinas

Results in the Carolinas mirrored those elsewhere, with a few Congressional seats changing parties, but most results showing voters content with incumbents, with President Clinton's problems apparently having little influence in the outcome. In NC, attorney John Edwards used \$6 million of his own money to defeat incumbent Republican Lauch Faircloth by a 51-47% margin. Faircloth tried hard to link Edwards with Clinton, but, according to exit polls, only about 25% of all voters cast their vote in the Senate race, at least in part, to oppose Clinton, while 19% cast their vote at least in part to support Clinton. 54% said they did neither, and Edwards won the votes of that group by a 58-40% margin.

Edwards had been criticized by some gay activists for not taking a position on the proposed Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA), which would prohibit discrimina-

tion based on sexual orientation by employers with over fifteen employees. But Faircloth's "0" rating from the Human Rights Campaign (HRC) on gay issues probably put most gays in Edwards camp (since the NC exit poll did not ask voters about their sexual orientation, any analysis of the "gay vote" is only speculation).

In the only change to the state's delegation in the U.S. House of Representatives, former state representative and 1996 Republican gubernatorial candidate Robin Hayes won an open seat now held by 24-year Democratic incumbent Bill Hefner, a moderate Democrat. Hayes, who authored the state's infamous "Teach Abstinence Before Marriage" bill, had a tougher than expected race however, winning by a 51-47% margin against attorney Mike Taylor.

Democrats regained control of the NC State House of Representatives, which had been in GOP hands for four years, and extended their margin in the state Senate to 35-15. Most legislative candidates endorsed by NC Pride PAC won, including incumbent senators Brad Miller and Eric Reeves in the two-member 14th District (Wake County), and Ellie Kinnaird and Howard Lee in the two-member 16th District (Orange, Chatham, Moore, Lee and Randolph counties). In the House, Democrat Marion McLawhorn defeated arch-conservative Henry Aldridge in the 9th District (parts of

Pitt and Greene counties).

In Mecklenberg County, gays celebrated the defeat of another member of the County Commission's "Gang of Five," the group of four Republicans and former Democrat Hoyle Martin who had taken control of the commission last year after a controversy over the funding of the arts in Charlotte. Martin, along with Republicans Bill James, George Higgins, Joel Carter and Tom Bush, took over the Commission, ousting Commission chair Parks Helms.

But with the defeat of Carter on Tuesday, only James remains on the Commission (Bush ran unsuccessfully for Congress, Martin failed to make the ballot as an Independent and Higgins was defeated in the primary). Democrats now hold a solid 7-2 margin and Helms is again expected to be named chairman. Democrats also took control of the Wake County Commission away from the GOP.

In SC, two darlings of the religious right, Governor David Beasley and U.S. Representative Bob Inglis lost their races for governor and senate, respectively. Beasley lost his reelection bid to former state representative Jim Hodges. Inglis, who has made a number of anti-gay statements while a member of Congress, lost to incumbent Ernest Hollings, who won his sixth term.

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