

Bush rolls to 2nd term, sets next 4-year agenda

Voters turn out in record numbers

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Nov. 4 — President Bush claimed a re-election mandate Wednesday after a record 59 million Americans chose him over Democrat John Kerry and voted to expand Republican control of Congress as well.

He pledged to pursue his agenda on taxes and Iraq while seeking "the broad support of all Americans."

Kerry conceded defeat in make-or-break Ohio rather than launch a legal fight reminiscent of the contentious Florida recount of four years ago.

"I hope that we can begin the healing," the Massachusetts senator said.

Claiming a second term denied his father, George H.W. Bush, the president struck a conciliatory tone, too.

"A new term is a new opportunity to reach out to the whole nation," he said, speaking directly to Kerry's supporters.

"To make this nation stronger and better, I will need your support and I will work to earn it," he said. "I will do all I can do to deserve your trust."

It was a warm-and-fuzzy close to one of the longest, most negative presidential races in a generation.

Bush didn't use the word mandate, but Vice President Dick

Cheney did, and the president's intention was clear as he ticked off a familiar list of second-term goals: overhaul the tax code and Social Security at home while waging war in Iraq and elsewhere to stem terror.

Bush stands to reshape the federal judiciary, starting with an aging Supreme Court that voted 5-4 to award him Florida four years ago. In all branches of government, the GOP now holds a solid, if not permanent, ruling majority.

Bush's vote totals were the biggest ever and his slice of the vote, 51 percent, made him the first president to claim a majority since 1988 when his father won 53 percent against Democrat Michael Dukakis.

Like Dukakis, Kerry is a Massachusetts politician who was labeled a liberal by a Bush.

This president also called Kerry a flip-flopping opportunist who would fight feebly against terror.

None of that rancor was evident Wednesday, when Kerry called Bush to concede the race.

He told Bush the country needed to be united, and Bush agreed. But the numbers suggest the country is deeply split.

Bush's victory ensures Republican dominance of virtually every quarter of the U.S. political

system for years to come — the White House, Congress and the federal judiciary.

Democrats pored over election results and sadly determined that the GOP base was bigger, more rural, suburban and Hispanic than they had ever imagined.

They looked within their own party and found plenty of Democrats to blame — Kerry, his running mate John Edwards, their layers of consultants and legions of former Bill Clinton aides.

The jockeying began in earnest for the 2008 race, with Edwards signaling his ambitions by pressing Kerry to wage a legal fight for Ohio.

Democrats love to fight the GOP, particularly Democrats who vote in primaries and caucuses.

"You can be disappointed, but you cannot walk away," Edwards told supporters at Kerry's concession.

"This fight has just begun."

Supporters of Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton, herself a potential candidate in 2008, accused Edwards of posturing.

Kerry himself showed no signs of exiting the political arena. "I'll never stop fighting for you," he told backers. Still, it was a grim day for Democrats.

Party strategists had long hoped to supplant their political losses in the Midwest and South with growth in the Hispanic-rich Western states, but those plans were put in doubt Tuesday night.

Exit polls suggested that Bush had increased his minority share of the Hispanic vote since 2000.

One-third of Hispanics said they were born-again Christians and nearly 20 percent listed moral values as their top issue, suggesting they have more in common with Republicans than Democrats.

Easley, Burr capture victories

Price, Kinnaird, Insko also win

FROM STAFF REPORTS

Nov. 3 — Both the Republican and Democratic parties saw a mix of victory and defeat in North Carolina on Election Day.

Gov. Mike Easley squashed Republican challenger Patrick Ballantine on Tuesday, garnering 55 percent of the vote with 99 percent of precincts reporting.

Ballantine received 43 percent.

In Orange County, Easley received 66.54 percent of the vote, while Ballantine received 31.16 percent.

Ballantine held the lead based on absentee ballots and early voting results, but Easley's supporters turned up at the polls Tuesday to carry him to a resounding victory.

Ballantine, who retired as N.C. Senate minority leader to run for governor, conceded the race early.

"It was too difficult to overcome an incumbent with all his (financial) resources," Ballantine said after his concession speech.

Back in the winner's circle, N.C. Democratic Party Chairwoman Barbara Allen said Easley has proven himself by leading the state through adverse budget conditions and advocating innovative education initiatives.

"He sees the upturn (in the economy)," she said.

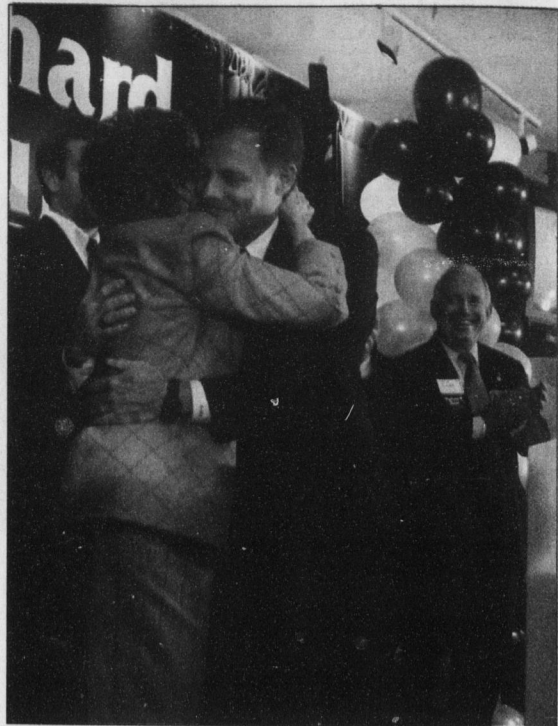
"And education will be in the forefront of his administration. We need early education. He will focus on retooling, retraining the work force — finding not just jobs, but good jobs."

After months of bitter campaigning and mudslinging, Republican Rep. Richard Burr defeated Democrat Erskine Bowles to become the state's junior senator.

With 99 percent of precincts reporting, Burr won 52 percent of the popular vote Tuesday, while Bowles won 47 percent.

"Today is a special day for me, and I want to thank everyone who believed in my candidacy," Burr the more than 500 people attending the victory party at the Bridger Field House at Wake Forest University's Groves Stadium.

"I feel fortunate and blessed to be standing in front of you as winner of the North Carolina Senate race."



DTH FILE PHOTO/SARA LEWKOWICZ

Newly elected Republican Richard Burr hugs U.S. Sen. Elizabeth Dole during his acceptance speech at Wake Forest University on Election Day.

Bowles, also surrounded by family and friends, took the stage 10 minutes later at the Raleigh Convention Center to congratulate Burr on his win.

This latest attempt at the Senate is the second for Bowles. Though he has been a major actor in successful campaigns, such as President Clinton's 1992 bid for the White House, he has yet to secure an elected office for himself.

It was a close race to the end. According to a Mason-Dixon poll published Friday, Bowles and Burr were separated by just three-tenths of a percentage point.

North Carolina will now have two Republican senators. Sen. Elizabeth Dole defeated Bowles in the 2002 election for Senate.

In the race for the 4th District of the U.S. House, Rep. David Price cruised to re-election over the back of Republican Todd Batchelor.

Batchelor, a political newcomer, was no match for the longtime congressman, who won his ninth

term — and his fifth straight — by garnering more than 60 percent of the vote.

The 4th District encompasses the entirety of Orange and Durham counties, a chunk of Wake County and a sliver of Chatham County.

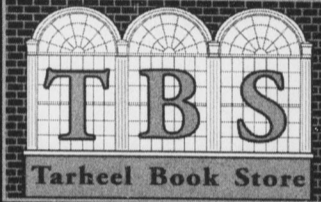
In the state Senate, Sen. Ellie Kinnaird, D-Orange, beat out Republican Robert "Whit" Whitfield in the race for the 23rd District.

The win was long anticipated but not guaranteed.

Redistricting made a victory slightly tougher for the fourth-term senator. Orange County remained in her territory, but predominately Democratic Chatham County was replaced by Person County, a fairly conservative area.

Finally, in the race for the state House, Rep. Verla Insko won re-election. No one ran against her.

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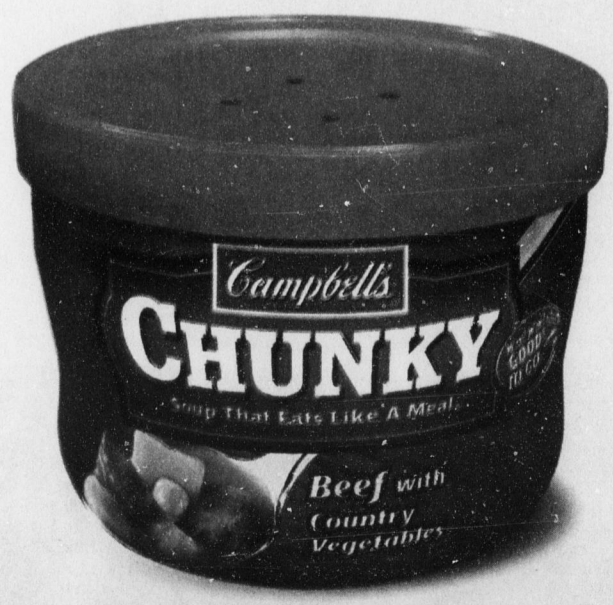
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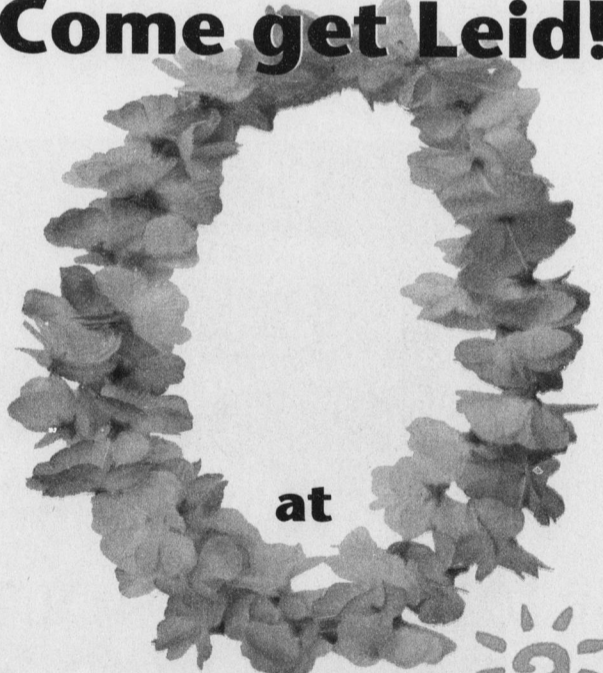
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