

North Georgia News

NOVEMBER 9, 2016 Hometown newspaper of Blairsville, Suches and Union County

www.nganews.com

ELECTION RESULTS

Commissioner Paris re-elected amid record voter turnout

By Todd Forrest
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Union County voters re-elected Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris (D) to a fifth term on Tuesday, Nov. 8, with close to two-thirds of the vote over former commissioner Harold Cook (R).

Paris, who defeated the incumbent Cook in 2000, then won re-election against Cook in 2004 and 2008, was victorious over the Republican with more than 7,700 votes.

Voters turned out in record numbers in Union County, casting 11,866 ballots in the commissioner's race.

"There are so many people to thank, but first I have to thank the voters because they are the ones that put me in office," Paris said during his victory celebration on Tuesday night. "I am so excited to have had this kind of turnout. It was probably the biggest turnout that we've ever had, and to have received 65 percent of the vote in this day and age, it's really incredible and I'm really proud of that."

According to previous reporting done by the *North Georgia News*, Paris tallied 1,217 more votes than he did in 2012, and 1,439 more than 2008, when he defeated Cook with 60 percent of the electorate.

This year, Paris collected 65.03 percent to Cook's 34.97.

"I have to thank my wife (Dinah) because I couldn't do this without her," Paris said. "I also have to thank my daughter, who has supported me, all of my friends and everyone across the county.

"Finally, my biggest fan ever since I got into politics has been my sister Paula Paris Johnson, who passed away a few years

ago. I know she would be so excited to be here and be a part of this. As someone said tonight, she was looking down on us and casting her approval."

Added Commissioner Paris: "I've had so many nice things said to me about what we're doing and what's going on in the county while we've been campaigning. It makes me feel like we've done what we've needed to do and people realize that and appreciate that."

In the statewide races, incumbent Republican Johnny Isakson returns to the U.S. Senate with the race being called just after 9:30 p.m., with Isakson hovering around 60 percent.

Isakson put it away locally with 80.3 percent of the vote in Union County to Jim Barksdale's (D) 15.9 percent.

As of 11:55 p.m. on Election Day, the race for the White House was too close to call nationally, however, the race in Georgia was called for Donald Trump (R).

In Union County, the margin was even greater with Trump collecting 82 percent. Democrat Hillary Clinton received 16 percent while Libertarian Gary Johnson picked up 2 percent.

In other statewide races, incumbent Tim Echols will return to his District 2 Public Service Commission seat with 71 percent of the votes at press time. Libertarian Eric Hoskins was at 29 percent statewide and 13 percent locally as Echols handily took Union County with 87 percent.

As of 11 p.m. statewide, more than 60 percent voted, "No" on Constitutional Amendment 1, which provides greater flexibility to fix failing schools through increasing community involvement.

Union County also reflect-

ed the rest of the state with 63 percent voting "No" on Amendment 1.

Amendment 2, which authorizes penalties for sexual exploitation and assessments on adult entertainment to fund child victims' services, received overwhelming support with 83 percent statewide and 82 percent locally.

Amendment 3 was successful with 63 percent statewide and 59 percent locally. Amendment 3 reforms and re-establishes the Judicial Qualifications Commission and provides for its composition, governance and powers.

Amendment 4 received overwhelming support in Union County with 80 percent of the vote. Across the state, it gained 81 percent of the vote.

Amendment 4 dedicates revenue from existing taxes on fireworks to trauma care, fire services, and public safety.

In uncontested races, incumbent Doug Collins (R-Gainesville) returns to his District 9 seat in the U.S. House of Representatives.

Incumbent Steve Gooch (R-Dahlonega) ran an uncontested race for his District 51 State Senate seat.

Matt Gurtler (R-Tiger) was uncontested in his bid for the District 8 seat that was vacated by Stephen Allison (R-Blairsville).

Locally, Superior Court Clerk Judy Odom (D), Sheriff Mack Mason (R), Tax Commissioner Lee Knight (R), Surveyor Jason Henson (R), Coroner Benny Irwin (R) all ran unopposed.

Two school board members also ran uncontested races. District 1 Republican Janna Akins will replace her father Gary Davenport (D) in January, and District 3 Republican incumbent Cindy Byers will return for her second

term after running unopposed in the General Election.

Commissioner Paris' 31 percentage points margin of victory is his second largest margin of victory since he was elected in 2000. In 2004, Paris defeated Cook by a 32-point margin (66 percent to 34 percent).

And he said he's thankful for those who have helped him to do his job over the years.

"Obviously, my staff are key," Paris said. "I can't forget about the county employees that do all of the work and the detention center detainees. We couldn't do a lot of this stuff without them. I know I'm going to forget some people, but I am just so excited to have it over and to be ratified that what we're doing is the right thing, and people like it and appreciate it."

Added the commissioner: "There are always people out there that don't want you to do anything or support anything, and unfortunately, there's always going to be that group, but I'm going to continue to do what we're doing and try to make this a better county and a better place to live.

"I'm going to continue on the path that we're on because the public has let us know that they like that path, and there are so many people that I need to thank.

"We have a lot of projects that we're working on, so continuing those projects is going to be the fun part of the job. I'm going to continue to keep our budget in line, continue to keep our taxes as low as we can and still do things that the public wants us to do. In the future, I want to keep doing what we're doing and keep making Union County a better place to live."