Abbott, O’Rourke win gubernatorial nominations with different views on education; most of TSTA’s endorsed legislative candidates advance in primaries

Republican Gov. Greg Abbott and Democratic challenger Beto O’Rourke, a former congressman from El Paso, won their respective party primaries over multiple opponents and will face off for the state’s top job in the November general election.

Abbott won his nomination by attacking public education with false accusations about critical race theory, threats to ban books about diversity from schools and trying to undermine the confidence of parents in teachers. O’Rourke, meanwhile, made support for public schools and educators a priority of his campaign.

Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick won the Republican nomination for reelection, also by attacking public education, while accountant Mike Collier and state Rep. Michelle Beckley outpolled other candidates and will meet in a May 24 runoff election for the Democratic nomination against Patrick.

Attorney General Ken Paxton, whose unresolved criminal indictment for fraud and other controversies may finally be catching up with him, was forced into a runoff in his reelection bid for the Republican nomination by Land Commissioner George P. Bush. Joe Jaworski, a Galveston lawyer and former mayor of the city, will meet Rochelle Garza, a former lawyer for the American Civil Liberties Union from the Rio Grande Valley, in a Democratic runoff for the office.

In other statewide races:

Republican Comptroller Glenn Hegar won his party’s nomination for the office again and will face the winner of a May runoff between Janet Dudding and Angel Luis Vega; Democrat Susan Hays will challenge Republican incumbent Sid Miller for agriculture commissioner; and the race for land commissioner will be up for grabs in both Republican and Democratic runoff elections.

All these statewide races, as well as the district races below, were the first under the new, restrictive voting law enacted by the Republican legislative majority and signed by Gov. Abbott last year. Thousands of mail-in ballots alone were rejected by local election officials because of a legal technicality in the new law, and it is unknown to what extent other provisions in the law affected primary votes and will affect election results going forward.

Other election results included:

Texas House

TSTA-endorsed candidates in races for the Texas House of Representatives did well, with only a few going to a May runoff. Thank you for voting Education First!
Republican Rep. Lynn Stucky in HD 64 had the closest margin. As of this writing, the race still had not been called, but Stucky had a 102-vote lead in late, unofficial returns. Our endorsed Republican candidates who are leading going into the runoffs are Rep. Kyle Kacal (HD 12), Rep. Glenn Rogers (HD 60), Rep. Phil Stephenson (HD 85) and Barron Casteel (open seat in HD 73).

Among Democratic races for the Texas House, Erin Gamez won the nomination for HD 38, and Ruben Cortez is leading into a runoff in HD 37. In El Paso’s HD 79, Claudia Ordaz Perez beat Art Fierro in the only race where TSTA endorsed both candidates as friendly incumbents. It is the only loss at this point for our endorsed candidates in the Texas House.

In other Democratic House races, Public Education Chair Harold Dutton of Houston (HD 142) had a 136-vote lead in late, unofficial returns, but his race had not yet been called. Lulu Flores won the nomination for an open seat in HD51 in Austin.

**STATE SENATE**

Sen. John Whitmire of Houston, the longest-serving member of the Senate and TSTA’s endorsee, won the Democratic nomination for Senate District 15, the only contested Senate primary race in which we endorsed a candidate.

A closely watched Senate race in November will be in District 10 in North Texas, where TSTA’s endorsed candidate, Sen. Beverly Powell, D-Burleson, will be defending her seat against a Republican challenge from Rep. Phil King of Weatherford in a district that was redistricted to favor a Republican over a Democrat.

**STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION**

TSTA member and incumbent Rebecca Bell-Metereau won the Democratic nomination for the State Board of Education, District 5, and will face Republican Mark Loewe in November. But we lost another SBOE race in District 14, where Evelyn Brooks beat our endorsed candidate, incumbent Sue Melton-Malone, in the Republican primary.

Another State Board of Education seat to watch is in District 1, which is going to a May runoff in the Democratic primary between Melissa Ortega and Laura Marquez. Educators won a huge victory when another Democratic candidate, Omar Yanar, lost after coming in third. Yanar had received thousands of dollars in campaign contributions from out-of-state and charter interests.

**CONGRESSIONAL RACES**

All the congressional candidates endorsed by NEA/TSTA won their primary races. In another closely watched congressional race in District 28 in South Texas, challenger Jessica Cisneros by a razor-thin margin apparently has forced longtime Democratic incumbent, Henry Cuellar of Laredo, into a runoff for the party’s nomination.

TSTA PAC will be reviewing many runoff elections up and down the ballot. So, stay tuned for future endorsements, stay involved in the May runoff elections and keep voting Education First!