



# LEGISLATIVE COLUMN

By PAUL FOGLEMAN, EDITOR

The North Carolina House of Representatives coalition that introduced bipartisan leadership survived the July 20 primary. But barely.

Republican Co-Speaker Richard Morgan overcame a serious challenge in his district with 51 per cent of the votes. However, several of his key allies, including David Minor of Wake, co-chair of the Finance Committee, and Rex Baker of Surry, co-chair of Appropriations, were defeated. Also losing was Rep. Michael Decker of Forsyth, who switched to the Democratic Party hours before the 2003 session convened. His decision helped House Speaker Jim Black maintain his role as leader of the Chamber's Democrats.

Morgan's bitter enemies in Wake County also survived primary fights. But one of his key allies – Rep. Julia Howard of Davie – defeated Rep. Frank Mitchell, who was on the speaker's hit list.

Former Rep. Art Pope of Raleigh, a wealthy businessman, helped finance opposition to Morgan and his key allies. An ultra-conservative, Pope said the elections should be a wake-up call for Republicans aligned with Morgan.

"A majority of Republican voters want Republican policies in the General Assembly, not the failed policies of Democrats," Pope said. But Morgan consultant Paul Shumaker said his critics came up short. "They don't win unless they beat him," he was quoted as saying.

Rep. Debbie Clary, an ally of Morgan and co-chair of Appropriations, easily defeated her primary opponent in Cleveland County.

Former Rep. Monroe Buchanan, a Republican and Black ally, failed in his effort to regain his seat in Mitchell County.



For Republicans, the primary showed the party is moving further to the right.

In the 5th Congressional District, Vernon Robinson, who describes himself as a "black Jesse Helms" led the field of eight candidates and faces a runoff with State Sen. Virginia Foxx, also a conservative. The race was marked by bitter exchanges between the two.

James Harrell Jr., father of Rep. Jim Harrell, won the Democratic nomination for the 5th District. A popular dentist and former head of the UNC-Chapel Hill alumni, Harrell now is poised to woo moderate Republicans who had supported Ed Broyhill.

The runoff in the 10th District will feature two conservatives backed by the Christian coalition. N.C. Rep. Patrick McHenry and Catawba County Sheriff David Huffman led the field which included Sandy Lyons, retired CEO for Corning fiber optics division, and Carolina Mills Chairman George Moretz. Moretz spent almost \$1 million on his race which amounted to \$130 for each vote he received. Lyons was supported by retiring Congressman Cass Ballenger.



Sen Jim Forrester of Gaston County easily beat his incumbent colleague R.B. Sloan of Iredell. Sen. Forrester, a physician, is Senate Minority Leader and has been criticized for being too cooperative with Democrats although he has pushed for a constitutional amendment to ban gay marriage in North Carolina.

In Mecklenburg, the comeback effort of Fountain Odom was sidetracked by the victory of Charlotte City Councilman Malcolm Graham who received the endorsement of the NCAE. Odom had been co-chair of Appropriations in the Senate prior to his defeat in 2002.



As Republicans move further to the right, does this represent a state trend or a party trend? Democrats are pondering this question.

If Republican centralists are left behind by their party, will they look at Erskine Bowles, and Democratic congressional candidates in the 5th and 10th district more closely? How long will be the coattails of President Bush as the WTO deadline nears?



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