

TOP STORY

Primary results final, Atlantic City an outlier on vote-by-mail results

Michelle Brunetti Post
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MAYS LANDING — The results of the June 8 primary election are now certified in Atlantic County, and show that vote-by-mail results differed markedly from machine results in only one contested primary — in Atlantic City, where political organizer Craig Callaway was involved in a campaign.

Tuesday was the deadline for finalizing results under state law.

Callaway has long been involved in the political scene in Atlantic City — first as a councilman who went to federal prison on bribery and other charges, and more recently as a campaign worker.

He was the campaign manager for Democratic mayoral challenger Tom Foley, who lost to incumbent Marty Small Sr. but won the vote-by-mail count.

Small won 80% of the machine count on Election Day with 1,838 votes to Foley's 438. But Foley won the vote-by-mail ballots 721 to 702.



Atlantic City Mayor Marty Small declares victory in the Democratic primary

The team of three candidates for City Council running with Small, who each got at least four times the machine votes of their opponents, did not win the mail-in ballot count either.

“It is unusual to see such a divergence in a primary election,” said John Froomjian, executive director of the William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy at Stockton University.

In general elections, when one party might use vote-by-mail more than another, it is less rare for the mail-in results to differ, Froomjian said.

Callaway has acknowledged he was working for Foley on a get-out-the-vote effort focused on mail-in ballots, and was providing transportation and payments to people to act as messengers to pick up ballots for Atlantic City voters.

“No comment,” Callaway said Tuesday when contacted by phone and asked how the machine and mail-in totals would differ so much.



Today's primary to settle bruising campaigns for Atlantic City mayor, state Senate

“You would need to do a detailed analysis of who voted to really get a sense of why this happened,” Froomjian said, and to determine whether anything improper happened.

For example, Froomjian said, Foley and Callaway may have worked Foley’s firefighter or public safety worker contacts through vote-by-mail.

“That wouldn’t be improper in any way,” Froomjian said.

Callaway also would not comment on whether he would stay involved in working for any candidates in the general election in the fall.

Asked about Callaway’s mail-in results and what they might mean, Small only replied, “Who’s that?”



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Judges says no to Foley request for extended primary election

At his victory party on election night, Small said the Callaway organization is a thing of the past.

“We know the games they play, all the dirty stuff, but I think it’s safe to say there’s a new lead organization in town — Team Small!” Small said. “And to the Callaway organization: It’s over!”

There were only slight differences between machine and vote-by-mail results in other contested primaries in the county.

Republican Vince Polistina, an Egg Harbor Township engineer, has now officially won the nomination for state Senate in the 2nd Legislative District covering most of Atlantic County; and Egg Harbor City Mayor Lisa Jiampetti won her primary to be the Democratic nominee for Atlantic County clerk.

Polistina got 70% of the machine vote while 30% went to his opponent, Seth Grossman, of Atlantic City. In the mail-in count, Grossman's percentage went up slightly to about 32%.



In the Atlantic County clerk race, Jiampetti dominated with 90% of the machine vote to 10% for opponent Mico Lucide, of Mays Landing. His percentage improved to about 13% in vote-by-mail ballots.

In the Republican race for nomination to run for governor, Jack Ciattarelli got 58% of the machine vote to Hirsh Singh's 25%, Phil Rizzo's 15% and Brian Levine's 2%. Ciattarelli's winning margin in vote-by-mail ballots increased to 68% to Singh's 23%, Rizzo's 6% and Levine's 3%.

The mayoral results showed the limits of Callaway's influence, Froonjian said.

“You can see if it’s not a close election, the Callaway organization really can’t change the outcome,” he said.

For Callaway’s efforts to be successful, Froonjian said, “it needs to be in a low-turnout election or one that’s really, really close where 100 to 200 votes can make a difference,” such as in a school board race or one in which no candidate has strong name recognition.

“That’s a dicey way to stake your victory,” he said.



Small

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Atlantic City Council Democratic Primary

Mayor Marty Small Team (overall winners)

Marty Small: 1,828 machine, 702 mail-ins, 108 provisionals (2,638)

Stephanie Marshall: 1,615 machine, 520 mail-ins, 82 provisionals (2,217)

George Tibbitt: 1,566 machine, 601 mail-ins, 95 provisionals (2,262)

Bruce Weeks: 1,661 machine, 530 mail-ins (2,282)

Tom Foley Team

Tom Foley: 438 machine, 721 mail-ins, 45 provisionals (1,204)

M. Suhel Ahmed: 364 machine, 850 mail-ins, 50 provisionals (1,264)

Aaron Carrington: 388 machine, 627 mail-ins, 41 provisionals (1,056)

Shameeka Harvey: 366 machine, 614 mail-ins, 37 provisionals (1,017)

Running independently

Geoffrey Dorsey: 222 machine, 111 mail-ins, 15 provisionals (348)

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Staff Writer

In my first job after college got paid to read the New York Times and summarize articles for an early online data base. First reporting job was with The Daily Record in Parsippany. I have also worked in nonprofits, and have been with The Press since 1990.