

GOP gains county board seats

■ Republicans gained two additional seats in Tuesday's election, boosting their majority from a 5-4 margin to 7-2 come Jan. 1.

BY DEAN COUSINO

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Republicans claimed two more seats on the Monroe County Board of Commissioners by winning three of the four contested races Tuesday.

Vice Chairman Al Potratz and R. Mark Ellsworth, both Democrats, lost their bids for re-election to Republican challengers Dawn Asper and Greg Moore Jr., respectively, while Democratic incumbent Jerry Oley, the longest-serving commissioner on the nine-member body, retained his seat with a 121-vote victory over challenger Bill Kipf, a Republican making his first bid for public office. Mr. Oley won, 3,085-2,964.

The two Republican gains will boost the Republican majority from a 5-4 margin to 7-2 on Jan. 1. All of the commissioner terms are for two years.

Mrs. Asper, 62, upset Mr. Potratz, 3,977-3,761.

A Newport resident, she has been a self-employed chiropractic physician since 1982. Married and the mother of four grown sons, she earned bachelor's and doctorate degrees in chiropractic care and also is certified as an advanced emergency medical technician.

She ran unsuccessfully for the same commissioner seat in 2014. District 3 is made up of Ash and Berlin townships and the Villages of Carleton, Estral Beach and South Rockwood.

Mr. Potratz, 72, has served on the board since 2007 and also is chairman of the board's judiciary and finance committees.

Mr. Oley, 51, said he was quite concerned due to the Republican sweep in many state and national contests. He said he was humbled to be returning to the board.

"I'm probably one of the more conservative Democrats in terms of spending money and getting the best bang for our money," the director of operations at Monroe Public Schools said. "This is my ninth term and I've always worked hard, treated people with respect, am a good listener and have made good sound decisions in the best interest of taxpayers."

He said he has worked with a "diverse board" since 2000 and people know him to be fair.

"I've tried to be impartial and objective and worked extremely hard with the board as a team," he said. "We all work together and do what's best for the community. One of the most important things is when people need help, you should help them."

District 6 is comprised of half of the City of Monroe south of the River Raisin along with about half of Monroe Township.

In District 8, Mr. Moore narrowly defeated Mr. Ellsworth by 182 votes — 3,185-3,003. Mr. Ellsworth is completing his first term on the board. District 8 is made up of two-thirds of heavily populated Bedford Township.

Mr. Moore, 34, said his district is almost evenly divided between Democrats and Republicans.

"The district goes with which ever president wins," the real estate agent said early this morning. "When your district is split down the middle, every vote counts. What it came down to is the absentee vote, which I really reached out to."

Because he is new to the community, he said he knocked on nearly 6,000 doors and sent out 1,000 flyers in the mail to get his name out there.

"Signs don't vote, people vote," Mr. Moore said. "I really made sure I shook hands and talked to enough people. It was an eye-opening, crazy experience."

He said he would push for accountability at the road commission and form a community coalition to make sure Bedford Township is represented at the

county level.

"I want to make sure the people in south county are heard at the county level," he said.

Republican Gary Wilmoth easily won re-election to a second term in District 7, defeating Democratic challenger Chris Bica of LaSalle, 4,534-3,047. District 7 is comprised of Erie and LaSalle townships, the City of Luna Pier and the southwest portion of Monroe Township.

Mr. Wilmoth attributed his win to having a strong presence in the communities he serves and listening to his constituents.

"I (campaign) harder than I did two years ago," the Erie resident said Tuesday night. "I was much more active in the community and go to all the township meetings in my district... a lot more people knew me."

In the next term, he said he would push for improved state funding for roads, scrutinize road commission management and assure property is assessed fairly under state taxing laws.

"Nobody knows what they're getting in Act 51 monies, where does it go and how much does each community get," Commissioner Wilmoth said. "As for the road commission, there's too much management over there. The workers are getting the job done, but how many bosses do you need? We have to look at it as a business and make sure we're spending our tax dollars wisely."

Five commissioner seats were uncontested. Results from those follow:

District 1 — David C. Hoffman (incumbent), Republican, 5,567 votes.

District 2 — Mark Brant (incumbent), Republican, 5,643.

District 4 — George L. Jondro, Democrat, 4,683.

District 5 — Jason R. Turner (incumbent), Democrat, 5,150.

District 9 — J. Henry Lievens (incumbent), Republican, 4,430.