

Jefferies declared winner, then undeclared a winner

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In one of the most dramatic elective reversals in the history of Maryland, Ruth Kirk, who, according to unofficial primary election results, lost her bid for reelection to the House of Delegates from the 44th district, was declared the winner this week.

Conversely, John Jefferies, who has believed since the primary election last month that he had edged Ms. Kirk out for the third seat by a handful of votes, was undeclared the winner.

The first tally of the 44th district's 15 wards ranked Elijah Cummings first with 4,108 votes, Clarence Mitchell IV second with 3,043 votes, and Jefferies third with 2,838, edging out the nearest runner-up, Kirk, by 13 votes.

When absentee ballots were later counted, Jefferies remained the third highest vote getter, but his margin of victory shrank to only four votes.

But, when the official count was made earlier this week, Kirk not only overtook Jefferies position, but did so by 88 votes.

Mr. Jefferies, chairman of the Maryland Legislative Black Caucus, has requested another recount, astonished by the large discrepancy in vote totals.

"They [Maryland Board of Elections] haven't yet told us where they found the discrepancies," Jefferies told the AFRO, expressing his surprise at the dramatic turnaround.

Even Ms. Kirk, the beneficiary of the newly discovered votes, said she was concerned with the errors that were apparently made by elections officials.

According to the official count, Cummings garnered 4,464 votes, over 300 more than the first tally, Mitchell received 3,212,

approximately 200 more than first reported, and Kirk received 3,072.

The second recount was scheduled for Friday, Sept. 30, thus no results were available as of AFRO press time.

About the recount for which he had to pay a fee, Mr. Jefferies said, "I owe this to the people who supported me. If I didn't do this, they might think that I'm not serious about being a legislator."

A representative since 1988, Jefferies said, "This is amazing—I was declared a winner, then I was undeclared a winner."

Despite the revised results, Jefferies and Kirk, who, along with Cummings, ran on a ticket together, remain friends. So much so that Kirk's first response upon hearing she was the true victor was to express concern for Jefferies.

Ms. Kirk, if official results prove correct, will assume her post as chairperson of the Women's Caucus.

Retreat

The Black Caucus, which has become one of the most powerful voting blocks in the Maryland General Assembly, will hold its annual retreat at the University of Maryland Conference Center in Port Deposit, Maryland on Oct. 3 and 4.

The two-day retreat will bring together newly elected officials, such as Clarence Mitchell IV from the 44th district and Talmadge Branch from the 45th, together with long-time members, such as Sen. Clarence Blount, for the first time as legislative peers.

Featuring workshops and a reception, the retreat provides Black legislators with the opportunity to hammer out a 100-day agenda, exchange progress reports and discuss nominations prior to the beginning of the

legislative session in January.

Regardless if the Kirk-Jefferies election outcome is again overturned by a recount, Mr. Jefferies will be replaced as chairman of the caucus, for his two-year term expires in January.