

Lonsdale-AuCoin race still too close to call



NORTHWEST

PORTLAND (AP) — Republican Sen. Bob Packwood said Wednesday he thought Rep. Les AuCoin would win the Democratic Senate primary "going away" and that negative advertising by AuCoin and businessman Harry Lonsdale made the race so close.

Only 212 votes separated businessman AuCoin and Lonsdale in a race that appeared likely to be decided by a recount.

Packwood, who easily disposed of four little-known opponents in Tuesday's GOP primary, said he was disappointed that he wouldn't know immediately who his opponent will be in November.

"We had been campaigning the past week or so on the assumption AuCoin would be the clear winner,"

Packwood said in an interview.

With that thought in mind, Packwood's final week of the campaign launched a TV advertising campaign against AuCoin accusing him of being a "study in hypocrisy."

AuCoin spokesman Rick Gureghian said Packwood's TV ads, coupled with Lonsdale's unrelenting attacks on AuCoin's bounced checks, had denied a clear primary victory to the 17-year veteran of Congress.

"The reason for the close race was the negative onslaught in the last week of this campaign," Gureghian said.

With 99 percent of precincts reporting from Tuesday's primary, AuCoin had 142,521 votes, or 42 percent, to Lonsdale's 142,309 votes, also 42 percent.

AuCoin had started the campaign season as the front-runner in the polls but was hurt by disclosures that he

bounced 83 checks on the House bank totaling more than \$60,000.

AuCoin apologized for the overdrafts, but Lonsdale seized on the issue, calling AuCoin a congressional insider beholden to special interests.

Lonsdale said Wednesday he was prepared to wait a while longer to find out if his strategy worked.

"It's essentially a flat-footed tie, and we have tens of thousands of absentee votes to count yet. We probably won't know the outcome until Friday," he said. "I'm going to go back to Bend to go fishing tomorrow."

Packwood said he was ready to run against either Democrat.

"With AuCoin, he is part of the insider scandal in the House of Representatives. With Mr. Lonsdale, it is a question of jobs," Packwood said, referring to Lonsdale's support for a ban on old-growth logging.

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