

# GOP unsettled by narrow Arizona win

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Associated Press

GLENDALE, Ariz. — It took a big money push from the Republican Party, tweets by the president and the support of the state's current and former governors, but the GOP held onto an Arizona U.S. House seat they would have never considered endangered in any other year.

Tuesday's narrow victory by Republican Debbie Lesko over a Democratic political newcomer sends a big message to Republicans nationwide: Even the reddest of districts in a red state can be in play this year. Early returns show Lesko winning by about 5 percentage points in Arizona's 8th Congressional District where Donald Trump won by 21 percentage points.

"Debbie will do a Great Job!" the president tweeted Wednesday.

The former state senator defeated Hiral Tipimene, a former emergency room physician who had hoped to replicate surprising Democratic wins in Pennsylvania, Alabama and other states in a year where opposition to President Trump's policies have boosted the party's chances in Republican strongholds.

Republican political consultant Chuck Coughlin called Tuesday's special election margin "not good" for national Republicans looking at their chances in November.

"They should clean house in this election," said Coughlin, longtime adviser to former Arizona Gov. Jan Brewer. "There's a drag on the midterms for Republican candidates that's being created by the national narrative. And it would be very hard to buck that trend if you're in swing districts, much less close districts, if you can't change that narrative between now and November."

Lesko replaces former Rep. Trent Franks, a Republican who resigned in December amid sexual misconduct allegations. A former aide told The Associated Press that he pressed her to carry his child as a surrogate and offered her \$5 million.

The district sprawls across western Phoenix suburbs, covering some of the most conservative areas of the red state, including the retirement community of Sun City.

At a victory party in her Glendale neighborhood, Lesko greeted supporters and looked back in wonder.

"I've really come a long



Republican congressional candidate Debbie Lesko, right, celebrates her win with former Arizona Gov. Jan Brewer.



A supporter of Democratic candidate Dr. Hiral Tipimene waits for election results with other supporters.



Hiral Tipimene, Democratic candidate in the special election in Arizona's 8th Congressional District, greets supporters.

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**Chuck Coughlin**

Republican political consultant and longtime adviser to former Arizona Gov. Jan Brewer

way and this is really quite overwhelming, it's very surreal," she said. "Twenty-five years ago I left an abusive husband and I sure as heck never would have dreamt in a million years that I would be running for Congress to be a

congresswoman."

Brewer, who backed Lesko and was at her victory party, also warned that Republicans need to make changes if they want to hold the district and other seats in November elections.

"I think all Republicans need to wake up and listen to what the public wants," she said. "Before November, we're going to have to work very hard. We're going to have to listen to our constituents."

Tipimene worked the dis-

trict hard, making inroads rarely seen in an area that hadn't elected a Democrat since the early 1980s. She was seen as a fresh Democratic face with relatively moderate views that could get support in the district. Making a

push for older voters, she had said Lesko would vote to go after entitlement programs like Social Security and Medicaid to pay for tax cuts that mainly benefit the wealthy. She's pushed a plan to allow some people to buy into Medicare.

Tipimene said she plans to run in November's general election and told supporters not to give up the cause. She said that despite the big Republican advantage in the district, the results show people were ready for a change.

"We have a very short amount of time, and clearly Ms. Lesko she had the registration numbers a little bit in her favor and she also had the name recognition," Tipimene said. "But given more time I know we can get more folks on our side."

The Associated Press called the race for Lesko after state officials released tallies of more than 155,000 mail-in ballots, which represent about 75 percent of the votes expected.

National Republican groups spent big to back Lesko, pouring in more than \$500,000 in the suburban Phoenix district for television and mail ads and phone calls to voters. On Election Day, Trump and current Arizona Gov. Doug Ducey urged Republicans to go to the polls and vote for Lesko. National Democratic groups, meanwhile, didn't commit money to the race, a sign they didn't believe the seat was in play.

Several Republican voters who spoke with AP said they backed Lesko primarily because she supported Trump's border security plans.

David Hunt, a 64-year-old retired construction and warehouse worker from Glendale, said he cast his vote Tuesday for Lesko because he believed that immigrants in the country illegally are creating unfair competition for jobs for recent high school students in Arizona.

"She's the best candidate to deal with the porous border," Hunt said.

His views were echoed by Larry Bettis, a retiree from Glendale.

"Immigration - the fence," Bettis said. "That's all I really care about."

Democrats said they wanted to send a message to Trump and supported Democratic health care plans.

"I don't like the president and felt it was time to take a stand," said Nikole Allen, a 45-year-old medical assistant from New York now living in Glendale. "It's time for us to vote the Republicans out."

## Park: Petition is now in circulation

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most notably at the Astoria Column and at McClure Park on Eighth Street, which raised funds for the installation of a new slide and other improvements.

City Councilor Bruce Jones, who represents Alderbrook, attended the neighborhood meeting over the weekend. Knowing there is strong interest in keeping Birch Field as a park — with plans for a friends group and long-term improvements in motion — could be enough to sway the council, he said.

He emphasized that he could only speak for himself, but said, "That would be enough for me to say, 'Let's not delist it.'"

Morley was one of a number of Alderbrook residents who attended a community meeting Jones held earlier this

spring after the news spread about the possible delisting. Following that meeting, she and others decided to be proactive in opposing the decision. They held a meeting of their own and decided to try to convince the council to change its mind. A petition to "Save Birch Field" is now in circulation.

Selling underutilized park land was one option councilors pursued as a way to make the Parks and Recreation Department more sustainable. City leaders have argued park facilities and responsibilities — as well as associated staffing and maintenance costs — have only increased over the years, with no real plan for how to sustain the department into the future. In prior years, the department's budget was supplemented by other city funds. Now, the city is trying to establish the real costs of running the depart-

ment, trimming programs and looking at other funding and management options to ensure it can sustain itself.

Earlier this year, four parks, including Birch Field, were under scrutiny for possible sale. Birch Field was determined to be the best candidate for development. Two of the other parks, with adoption agreements in place for maintenance and beautification, were taken off the list for the time being.

The fourth site, home to a reconstruction of the first U.S. Custom House built west of the Rocky Mountains, might be adopted by the Lower Columbia Preservation Society.

Staff told the City Council earlier this year it could be a difficult park to redevelop, and there was debate about the feasibility of moving the custom house elsewhere. The preservation society wants to keep

the house where it is and take over maintenance of the park, said Angela Cosby, the parks director. The society will present a case for the park on May 7 as well.

Morley said she loves being a part of a neighborhood and believes an improved Birch Field would enhance Alderbrook. She was also intrigued by the idea of forming a friends group.

"I was so excited about the opportunity for citizens to step up to the plate, and get involved in the community to help overcome budget shortfalls, that I jumped at the chance," she said.

She has been working with parks staff to figure out a path forward for Birch Field.

"It has been a great experience so far," she said, "and I am so excited to be part of creating the future of Birch Field and Park."

## Walking: 'It gives me incentive to keep going'

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Earlier this month, the Clatsop County Public Health Department began Step it Up!, a program that encourages people with cancer to walk with other survivors. The Oregon Health & Science University-Knight Cancer Institute awarded the county a \$15,025 grant for the project.

Doctors traditionally have advised people with chronic illnesses to reduce physical activity. More recent research has shown, however, that regular exercise can allow people to reap the benefits of physical activity without increasing the severity of their diseases, according to the American Cancer Society.

But as more doctors are recommending exercise, patients have needed to find ways to overcome much of the fatigue that comes with fighting cancer. Communal walking programs are one solution.

"It gives me incentive to keep going," said Colleen Siegfried, diagnosed with breast cancer at 59 in 2009. "It's not so much like exercise. It's fun that way."

Rather than following a rigid schedule, walkers are encouraged by group leaders like Keippela to move at their own pace, take breaks

when needed and gradually progress in speed and stamina. During the walks, conversations can range from small talk to how they are feeling physically.

"It's relaxed, informal," Keippela said. "We don't want anyone to strain themselves or push themselves because we'll get there."

Sessions take place a number of times each week at Clatsop Community College's Patriot Hall and Providence Seaside Hospital. Walkers say the indoor settings are beneficial.

"It feels like my shoes are filled with beach grass and sand. It's really nice to be in here on a flat surface," Siegfried said.

The program is funded through January, but how long it will last depends on the interest levels of the walkers, said Sarah Mitchell, a county public health nurse.

In the years after discovering she had cancer, Siegfried was also diagnosed with a genetic disorder that causes her chronic pain. Catching her breath after a walk Monday at Patriot Hall, she seemed optimistic that her condition — like Keippela's — will improve.

"I'd like to get stronger," Siegfried said. "I could go any direction, but I'd like to get stronger."

## Cougar: 'Leave the animal a way to escape'

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In the very rare instance of a cougar encounter, people should stay calm, stand their ground and speak loudly and firmly.

"Cougars often will retreat if given the opportunity," the state webpage notes. "Leave the animal a way to escape."

Cougars tend to avoid noisy areas and it is rare to have a cougar stay in the same area for more than a few days before moving on, unless they are near a good supply of livestock that is left out at night.

Coastal cougar populations appear to be on the rise with a total state population of more than 6,000, accord-

ing to a recent survey by the state. A handful of cougars have already been killed this year after they threatened public safety.

A cougar's range can vary greatly depending on the landscape it is navigating. Preliminary data collected from cougars collared this winter in Fish and Wildlife's Alsea

management area near Newport revealed the elusive predators may have relatively small ranges on the coast. The older males that were collared had ranges of about 50 square miles — smaller than what researchers have seen for cougars living in Eastern Oregon. One female's range appeared to be closer to 15 square miles.