

Election

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gubernatorial candidates are combined: just over 50 percent Democrat, about 47 percent Republican. Two independents and another no party preference candidate collectively won close to 3 percent.

—In seven other statewide races, including U.S. Senate, secretary of state and auditor, the Republican vote never breaks 50

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percent (either singularly or combined on more crowded ballots), ranging from nearly 40 percent to 48 percent.

—In all-important King County, which holds about a third of the state's voters, Inslee captured 59 percent of the vote, compared to McKenna's 35 percent. The combined Republican vote for King County was about 37 percent.

What does all of this mean? It depends on who you ask and which prior race you want to reference.

For example, in the 2008 primary, Republican Dino Rossi had 46.4 percent of the overall vote, (the combined Republican candidate vote in that race was 48 percent), and in King County, Rossi captured nearly 36 percent of the vote. Rossi ultimately lost to Gov. Chris Gregoire in the general election by six points.

But in 1980, the last time the state elected a Republican as governor, the combined

Republican vote in that primary was just 41 percent, and the ultimate winner, John Spellman, had a mere 17 percent out of a crowded ballot that had 14 candidates. He went on to defeat Democrat Jim McDermott by 13 points in the general election.

Since then, the Republican vote in the gubernatorial primary has ranged from 27 percent to 57 percent, with an ultimate Democratic win in the general.

Independent pollster Stuart Elway said that at the end of the day, primaries "don't tell you much, if anything, about the general."

"Candidates and campaigns do matter," he said. "It's not just math."

But Elway said that McKenna, seen as the GOP's strongest candidate at the top of the ticket in years, still faces hurdles because of Washington's Democratic-leaning electorate that

has elected Democratic governors since 1984. A recent Elway poll showed 35 percent of respondents identify as Democrat, 27 percent as Republican and 38 percent as independent.

"The odds for McKenna, even though he's been the front runner for a year and has been elected as AG twice, have always been stacked against him, just from history and party identification," he said.

McKenna campaign spokesman Charles McCray said he wasn't surprised by the primary results, and that the campaign will continue fighting for the support of independent voters who likely didn't participate in the primary because they're still assessing their choices.

"I don't believe in there being a ceiling that the Republicans cannot overcome," he said.

McKenna and Inslee have been campaigning since last summer, around the

Tattoo You



PHOTO BY SUSAN FRIED

Travis Livingstone, "Cool Aid," has his back worked on by tattoo artist Majenta of Diamond Tattoo and Body Piercing in Renton, Wash., at the 11th Annual Tattoo Expo at Seattle Center. The event, which was held Aug. 10-12, featured tattoo artists from around the country, an art show, tattoo contests and musical entertainment.

same time Gregoire announced she wouldn't seek a third term. Two recent polls, including one by Elway, showed Inslee taking a lead over McKenna for the first time in the campaign.

Christian Sinderman, a Democratic strategist involved in several campaigns in the state, including the governor's race, said that the "primary punctured the bubble that Rob McKenna was some kind of juggernaut electorally."

Inslee spokeswoman Jaime Smith said that while the numbers have given the cam-

aign a boost of confidence, there's still nearly three months left in the campaign. "We're not taking anything for granted," she said.

Chris Vance, a former chairman of the state Republican Party, said that even though the primary is only a snapshot of where the electorate is right now, he thinks the numbers should still be of concern to Republicans.

"It's no time for panic," he said, but, "It's going to be a very competitive race."

Doctors

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said Carol Shea, physician recruiter for PeaceHealth St. John Medical Center. In addition, fewer than 15 percent of doctors want to live in the West, Shea said.

"Then you take that percentage and divide it across small-town USA. Then how many of those (doctors) want to live in the Pacific Northwest? You're looking at pretty minuscule numbers when you look at it that way," Shea said.

While doctor salaries in rural areas are competitive and perhaps slightly higher than those in metro areas — they must be to compete — larger hospitals and clinics can offer access to more appealing lifestyles. Quality of schools is important issue, too, Shea said.

"There are many factors involved in being competitive (in the recruitment battle), but the No. 1 thing is location," Shea said.

Kris Sparks, a state of Washington health worker who helps recruit doctors to small communities, said the average doctor leaves medical school with \$164,000 in debt, and many are burdened with more than \$200,000 in student loans. Larger hospitals and organizations often offer signing bonuses or programs that assist doctors in loan repayment. Smaller facilities usually don't have money for that.

"There's no way we can offer to pay someone's student loans as a signing bonus," said Dr. Rich Kirkpatrick, internal physician at Kirkpatrick Family Care in

Longview. "You can just hope you make a positive impression on (recruited doctors) and they may come back later."

Another recruiting challenge for small communities is that doctors' spouses sometimes find it difficult to land jobs.

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"Most professionals are married to other professionals, and small towns have limited opportunities," said Dr. Albert Luh, primary care service area director for Kaiser Permanente, which operates a Longview clinic on Seventh Avenue. "Often the spouse has a hard time finding a job, unless they're both doctors, which happens quite a bit here."

Doctors who do chose to locate in Southwest Washington often seek out smaller communities. An example is Dr. Megan Chono Dudley, who started working at Kaiser's Longview clinic two weeks ago after leaving the University of New Mexico and finishing her residency program. Living in Longview puts her close to relatives in Seattle-area, Northern California and Hawaii, she said.

"I wanted to live in a smaller town and have access to a city but not be in a city,"

said Dudley, 37. "And I promised my husband we'd move closer to water. So we were excited to move here."

She added the area's schools, Lake Sacajawea and the friendly atmosphere were big reasons why she chose Longview over a

clinic in Enumclaw.

Luh said Kaiser is increasing its recruitment efforts and offering higher signing bonuses in preparation for meeting a surge in patient numbers expected from the new federal health care legislation.

"(Primary care) is still the frontline of medicine. It's still where the rubber meets the road," he said. "And if we don't get them now, we won't get them in the future."

One troublesome aspect of the doctor shortage is a lack of general practice and primary care doctors. Medical schools are graduating fewer general practice physicians as more med students go into specialties, which pay significantly higher wages.

"There's just going to be an overall shortage of primary care physicians," said Natalie González, recruitment specialist for the state Department of Health's rural health

office.

Washington medical facilities may also be contend with what Gonzalez perceives as the Northwest's regional disadvantage. She noted there are far fewer medical schools in the area — when compared to California and the East Coast — and that the University of Washington medical school supplies candidates for residency programs in Washington, Alaska, Wyoming, Montana and Idaho.

"Studies show students tend to practice where they went to school or performed their residency," she said. "Washington is an importer of physicians."

Kirkpatrick said community providers should attempt to rally together to promote the positives of the area. Even though each provider is competing with the others for talent, he said improving the community would benefit everyone.

Luh said medical schools could allow more students into their competitive programs to produce more doctors, and that increasing loan subsidies for medical students could also attract more students to primary care.

However, he's not optimistic the situation will improve.

"I don't see the shortage (of physicians) changing, and the population is growing and we're going to be covering more Americans, so there's going to be more people in the pool," Luh said.