

GOP WINS STATE CONGRESSIONAL SEATS

By Shawn Ashley
Staff Writer

■(GIT) Oklahoma Republicans appeared successful in their attempt to gain complete control of the state's congressional delegation in Tuesday's general election, reclaiming five of six seats, taking over the sixth and retaining control of state delegation to the United States Senate.

The hottest race of the night came, as expected, in the Third District, where Wes Watkins eked out an apparent win over Darryl Roberts. Throughout the night, the two candidates swapped the lead, with independent Scott Demaree consistently a distant third.

Watkins did what he had to do to win the race — Draw a substantial number of the heavily Democratic Little Dixie voters across party lines to cast their ballots in his favor. The accomplishment was not unusual; in his 1994 campaign for governor as an independent, Watkins won the Third District, beating Democratic Jack Mildren and Republi-

can Frank Keating, who went on to win the governor's office.

Going into Tuesday's election, the Third District was the only seat held by a Democrat, Rep. Bill Brewster, who announced last year that he would not seek reelection.

In the Second District, which was expected to be almost as hotly contested, Republican Tom Coburn retained his place in the House of Representatives, besting outgoing state House Speaker Glen Johnson.

In the remaining races for the House of Representatives, Republicans easily retained their seats.

District One Congressman and Republican incumbent Steve Largent swept up the largest number of votes, beating Democrat Randolph John Amen and independent Karla Condray.

In the Fourth District, which early predictions indicated would be one of the mostly hotly contested races, Republican incumbent J.C. Watts defeated Democratic challenger and former state representative Ed Crocker

with independent Robert T. Murphy picking up the remaining votes.

The story was much the same in the Fifth District, where Republican incumbent Congressman Ernest Istook defeated James Forsythe and independent Ava Kennedy.

In the Sixth District, Republican incumbent Congressman Frank Lucas defeated Paul Barby.

Last minute campaigning, particularly in the form of hard-hitting radio and television ads, did little for US Senate candidate Democrat Jim Boren. Republican incumbent Jim Inhofe swept by the cousin of former Senator David Boren, leaving the remainder of the votes to be split by independents Bill Maguire; Chris Nedbalek; and Libertarian Agnes Marie Regier.

Presidential challenger Bob Dole was the apparent winner of Oklahoma during Tuesday's election, bucking the trend at the national level that would send President Bill Clinton back to the White House for a second term.

Results from Tuesday's elections remained incomplete at presstime after a computer problem at the Oklahoma County Election Board delayed the availability of actual returns several hours. At presstime early Wednesday, 88 percent of the state's votes had been tabulated by the State Election Board. The remaining 12 percent of the vote appeared to be coming from Oklahoma County.

ELECTIONS CHANGE LITTLE IN LEGISLATURE

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■(GIT) Tuesday's general election seemed to bear out the old saying, "The more things change, the more they stay the same."

Republicans awoke election day with the hope of gaining a number, perhaps even a significant number, of seats in the state legislature.

With more than 88 percent of the votes counted early Wednesday morning, Republicans had gained two seats in the Senate and lost a total of one in the House.

Due to a computer problem in Oklahoma County, actual results from the State Election Board were not available for all the precincts in that county, making it impossible to accurately project the outcome of two races in the Senate — districts 43 and 47 — and 10 races in the House — districts 84, 87, 88, 92, 93, 94, 96, 97, 99 and 101.

The absence of those results makes it impossible to speculate on the impact of the change on control of the legislature. Because of the Democrats 35-13 super majority in the Senate going into Tuesday's election, however, it is obvious Republicans stood no chance of gaining control of the veto in that branch of the legislature, much less its control, despite the party's victories in districts 19 and 49, where Ed Long, of Enid, and Don

Williams, of Tulsa, were defeated respectively.

In the House, the story is somewhat different, but equally complicated because of the incomplete results. The Republicans loss of two seats — districts 74, which was held by John Smaligo, of Owasso, and 78, held by Tulsan Flint Breckinridge — combined with the party's gain of one seat — district 77, previously held by Democrat Gary Stottlemire, of Tulsa — threatened to wrest control of the veto from the GOP's hands.

While the exact division of power between Republicans and Democrats has yet to be settled, one trend was obvious across the board: Incumbents held a distinct advantage over challengers, evidenced by the defeat of only four incumbents, two Republicans and two Democrats, in those races with 100 percent of their precincts reporting.

Incomplete results also made it impossible to determine the winner of the race for Corporation Commission. At presstime, Republican incumbent Ed Apple held a 51 percent to 49 percent lead over Democratic challenger Wanda Jo Peltier. Although 88 percent of those votes had been counted, the closeness of the race, combined with the repeated lead switches throughout the night, made it impossible to accurately project a winner in that race.

