

TOPSY TURVY PRIMARY NIGHT YIELDS SEVERAL BIG UPSETS

Topping the list -- Railroad Commissioner Victor Carrillo, Rep. Betty Brown and Rep. Tommy Merritt. As many as five House Democratic incumbents could be defeated.

At the very top of the ticket, Rick Perry and Bill White avoided drama, wrapping up their respective party's nominations for Governor without the need for a runoff. For the record, Perry finished the evening with a bit more than 51 percent of the Republican primary vote while White won more than 76 percent of the Democratic primary vote. But farther down the ballot, things got very interesting in several races.

--- Several incumbents lost last night, the highest profile being Railroad Commissioner Victor Carrillo and SBOE lightning rod Don McLeroy. Carrillo could only muster 39.3 percent support in his bid for re-election against an opponent he badly outspent. And McLeroy lost by 839 votes to Thomas Ratliff, son of former state Sen. Bill Ratliff.

--- Some high profile House incumbents went down last night as well. People will be buzzing this morning about Betty Brown who appears to have lost by 108 votes to her former staffer Lance Gooden. Expect a recount here.

Tommy Merritt, meanwhile, lost his seat to challenger David Simpson by a larger margin - 856 votes.

On the Democratic side, no fewer than four incumbents - Dora Olivo, Tara Rios Ybarra, Terri Hodge and Al Edwards (by 11 votes!) - lost last night. A fifth, Norma Chavez, placed second but forced a runoff with Naomi Gonzalez.

--- Incumbents in the Senate did well. Sens. Bob Deuell and Steve Ogden won their primaries with relative ease. Even Kip Averitt, who withdrew from his race after filing deadline, won in SD 22 with 60 percent of the vote. The fun now begins in that district depending on what Averitt decides to do next. And in the open seat being vacated by Eliot Shapleigh, former El Paso County Attorney Jose Rodriguez easily lapped the field in the Democratic primary.

On the House side, some incumbents who were thought to be in tough races pulled out relatively easy wins. In Tarrant County, Todd Smith won 59 percent of the vote in what became a really nasty campaign in the closing days and Vicki Truitt won outright with 52 percent of the vote in a crowded field where her position on a local option transportation tax figured prominently.

And newly minted Republican Chuck Hopson started strong and cruised to victory in HD 11 with 61 percent of the vote.

Headed to runoffs on the GOP side in the House are Fred Brown against Gerald "Buddy" Winn in HD 14; Paul Workman and Holly Turner in HD 47; John Gordon and Larry Gonzales in HD 52; Mabrie Jackson and Van Taylor in HD 66; Delwin Jones and Charles Perry in HD 83; Mark Griffin and John Frullo in HD 84; Dan Huberty and Susan Curling in HD 127; and Jack "Connor" and Dianne Williams in HD 149.

--- On the Democratic side, Linda Chavez-Thompson won the Lite Guv race with 53 percent, avoiding a runoff and besting former Travis County DA Ronnie Earle who finished with 34.7 percent of the vote. DNC Chairman Tim Kaine sent congratulations early this morning to her and to White.

--- Hector Uribe won the Democratic nomination for Land Commissioner, ensuring that at the very least, his general election challenge of incumbent Jerry Patterson will keep us entertained with both men's demonstrated talent for a witty press release.

--- And in the GOP contest for Supreme Court, Place 3, less than a single percentage point separated the top four finishers. Former state Rep. Rick Green was the top vote getter with 18.96 percent of the vote while Debra Lehrmann took 18.22 percent. Jim Moseley got 18.12 percent and Rebecca Simmons had 18.03 percent.