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EDITOR'S PICK

Pat Curry takes Republican nomination for House District 56

From the 2024 elections: Local coverage series

Matt Kyle

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Pat Curry thanks the crowd at his election watch party Tuesday night at Tucker Hall. Curry won the Republican nomination. He will face Democrat Erin Shank in November.

Rod Aydelotte photos, Tribune-Herald

Matt Kyle

Waco businessman Pat Curry won the Republican primary for Texas House District 56 on Tuesday with 58.1% of the vote, defeating political activist Devvie Duke.

Curry will go on to face Waco lawyer Erin Shank in the November general election. Shank, who previously ran for the seat in 2022, was unopposed in the Democratic primary.

Curry said he is honored and humbled to win the nomination, which he called “the hardest job I’ve ever interviewed for.” He thanked his supporters for “hiring” him.

“I have met so many new friends and learned about so many new issues that need to be brought to the attention of our state government and our national government,” Curry said. “I’m honored to be able to represent District 56 and McLennan County both and just take them forward and fight for our values.”

Curry said his Waco origins and ties to local businesses mean he has seen many of Waco’s issues firsthand. He said he would be a strong voice for McLennan County, should he be elected in November.

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Curry also said he is glad to have run a positive campaign and said he feels Duke did not do so. Many of Duke’s campaign materials criticized Curry as a “liberal Republican” and said he donated money to Democratic politicians.

In response, Curry said in a February interview that the donations amounted only to \$500 and were seven years old.

Duke said Wednesday morning she is not yet done with politics.

"Despite the results (Tuesday), my commitment to conservative values remains unshaken," Duke said. "I have put so much of my time and attention in making a real difference in Texas, to protect our children, to secure our elections and our borders, and to provide families every opportunity to be successful."

Duke said it is too soon to say which office she would run for in the future, and thanked her followers for their support in her campaign.

"I extend my heartfelt thanks to everyone who took a stand for Christian conservative principles and supported my campaign," Duke said. "Our fight doesn't end here; it only grows stronger."

Curry won 15,116 votes or 58.1% to Duke's 10,891 votes or 41.9%.

The District 56 race was left wide open in September when 20-year incumbent **Charles "Doc" Anderson announced he would retire** at the end of his term. Curry had already announced his campaign a few weeks earlier, and Duke would announce hers a few weeks later in October.

Both Curry and Duke drew local and statewide Republican support. Curry drew endorsements from Texas Gov. Greg Abbott, Texas Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick and McLennan County Sheriff Parnell McNamara, while Duke was endorsed by Anderson and Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton.

Curry has identified issues at the Texas-Mexico border, such as drug and human trafficking, as his top priority should he win the election in November. He said more efforts should be taken to process immigrants coming into Texas and that he is in full support of Abbott's Operation Lone Star, which involves the deployment of Texas National Guard and Texas Department of Public Safety personnel to the border.

Curry also said he wants to solve a regulatory issue that **reemerged at the Legislature last year** regarding pollution from dairies in the Bosque River watershed, which he said was the issue that got him into the race. He said he believes he can solve the issue quickly and without passing major legislation by diversifying Waco's water supply so the city's water supply will not be as reliant on Lake Waco, which is fed by the Bosque. He also said he plans to bring together local officials and dairy farmers to find a mutually beneficial solution.

Curry also said he supports Abbott's plans for school vouchers, but wants to see a pilot version of the program to make sure it will work before it is widely implemented. Curry also said he is in favor of more funding for public schools.

Curry will face off against Shank in the Nov. 5 general election. Shank previously ran unsuccessfully against Anderson in the 2022 race, garnering 29.8% of the vote compared to Anderson's 70.2%. In recent races for the seat, the margin of victory was similar: In 2020, Anderson defeated Katherine Turner-Pearson with 67.3% of the vote and in 2018 he defeated Turner-Pearson with 65.8% of the vote.

Shank said she is against Abbott's school voucher proposal, and would push hard to advocate for teacher pay raises and public school funding. Shank also identified Bosque water pollution as a major issue she hopes to address, and similarly said the border crisis is a major issue she hopes to address. She said the current immigration system is broken.

Curry said he is confident he will defeat Shank in November.

"I feel confident that we will win the November election," Curry said. "We need to work hard to win it throughout the United States. We have got to win Washington. It's critical to our border. It's critical to our country and our homeland security."



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By Matt Kyle
