



The Star-Ledger

Congressional race a repeat of 2006

Frelinghuysen, Wyka win again in 11th District

Wednesday, June 04, 2008

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It will be Rep. Rodney Frelinghuysen versus Tom Wyka, take two. That's the repeat matchup for the November election in the 11th Congressional District after the incumbent Republican and Democratic challenger both won primary elections in the five-county district last night.

Frelinghuysen, 62, of Harding, steamrolled 26-year-old political newcomer Kate Erber of Morristown, winning many towns with as much as 90 percent of the vote yesterday in the Republican race.

Meanwhile, Wyka, 42, of Parsippany, won the first Democratic primary in the district in memory, easily defeating Harry Hager of Chester Township and Ellen Greenberg of Mendham Township.

The final numbers in both races were not available at press time last night for a district that includes all of Morris and parts of Essex, Somerset, Sussex and Passaic counties.

Frelinghuysen and Wyka squared off in 2006, with the incumbent winning a resounding victory in the GOP-controlled district. But Wyka last night vowed to give Frelinghuysen more of a battle this year.

"The whole thing comes down to a question of how long are we going to allow the Iraqi government to squander our military and financial resources," Wyka said during a campaign party in Morristown. "Why is Rodney Frelinghuysen backing the needs of big oil companies over the needs of ordinary citizens."

Frelinghuysen, who was in Washington, D.C., last night for a congressional vote, thanked Republican voters for his success, declining to engage Wyka in debate.

"I look forward to seeing my opponent on the campaign trail," said Frelinghuysen.

Erber, who ran on a ticket with U.S. Senate candidate Murray Sabrin, challenged Frelinghuysen's support of President Bush's foreign policies. She called for an immediate cessation of U.S. combat operations in Iraq, while suggesting a reassessment of America's role as the world's policeman.

"Frelinghuysen has been a puppet of the Bush administration: whether it is giving President Bush a blank check on Iraq and continuing to keep our troops fighting another country's civil war, increasing the size of government or increasing the role of the federal government. I will not be a lap-dog for any president -- I will do my job!" she said in a stinging last-minute internet message.

But Frelinghuysen, who has been in Congress since 1995 and had \$700,000 in campaign finances to virtually none for Erber, said the war strategy in Iraq and Afghanistan has been a success, especially due to the president's decision last year to bolster the number of troops in Iraq.

"I am enormously proud of what those fine young people are doing in both countries," the veteran congressman said. "They are winning the war and winning the hearts and minds of Iraqis. What we're doing over there is working."

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