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Assessing the primary: Voters call for change

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Scott Black of Buckner said he's excited about all the fresh faces that will be on Oldham Fiscal Court next year.

"I think it is good for the county," Black said. "I think the county government (next year) will be more receptive to citizen input."

Voters in Oldham's primary election chose mostly newcomers to lead the county starting next January. Five of the seven incumbent magistrates running for re-election lost. Magistrates Bob Leslie -- who was uncontested -- and Steve Greenwell survived the primary.

Republican Magistrate David Voegele won the bid for county judge-executive, defeating longtime magistrate and current Deputy Judge-Executive Paula Gish. So far, Voegele faces no opponents in November. Candidates have until Oct. 22 to file an intent to run as a write-in candidate.

"There's been an awful lot of talk in the community" about a need for change, said Republican Chairwoman Anne Gernstein, who did not endorse any candidates in the primary. "I think the people have spoken, and that says it all."

Longtime District 8 Magistrate Bob Deibel lost to newcomer Michael Logsdon, but Deibel said in a way he's "relieved."

"Nobody wants to lose, don't get me wrong, but this was not my life at all," said Deibel, who has been a magistrate for 21 years. "I'll go on about my business and do something else now."

Deibel said he was somewhat surprised that so few magistrates were re-elected, but he

attributes it to voters' disappointment with Frankfort and Washington.

"I feel this administration has done a great thing at getting things straightened out and on the right track, but (voters) aren't even thinking of that," he said.

Judge-Executive Duane Murner, who did not run for re-election, said he's "stunned" by the results.

"I did not think the Tea Party movement was going to penetrate the borders of Oldham County, but that was dead wrong," he said. "I thought there would be a little more credit for what has been accomplished over the last 3½ years."

Murner said he's already told Voegele that he'll help with the transition after November.

The newcomers who won the Republican primary alongside Logsdon were J.D. Sparks (District 5), who defeated incumbent Iva Davis; Brent Likins (District 1), who defeated incumbent Steve Church; Kevin Eldridge (District 6), who defeated incumbent Scott Davis; and Bob Dye (District 7), who defeated incumbent Rick Rash.

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In November, Dye, Eldridge and Leslie will face opposition from Democrats. Logsdon will face an Independent candidate.

Wayne Theiss in District 2, the district Voegele now represents, faces no opposition.

While many of the primary races were close, the clerk's office said that, as of May 24, no one had asked for a recount. Oldham has 40,230 registered voters, and 11,970 -- or nearly 30 percent -- of them voted in the primary.

Unless Democrat Sheri Betz wins against Dye in District 7, there will be no women on Fiscal Court next year.

Voegele said he had a feeling before the primary that voters were going to signal for a change in county leadership.

"I was somewhat surprised but not completely because many of the people I had been talking with expressed an interest in change," he said. "There's a saying, if you keep doing the same things, you keep getting the same results. I think there was a widespread feeling that people are interested in new results and a fresh approach."

Voegele received about 61.3 percent of the votes to Gish's 38.7 percent.

Gish had resigned from her position on May 14 after learning that a federal law prevented her from holding it while running for a political office. Because she lost the primary, Gish will return to her job until the end of the year.

Incumbents did succeed in other races, with County Attorney John Fendley, County Clerk Julie Barr, Property Valuation Administrator Ron Winters, and Jailer Mike Simpson defeating their opponents in their races for re-election. Fendley will face Democrat Stuart Ulferts in the November election.

Reporter Andrea Uhde can be reached at (502) 582-4663.

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