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ELECTION 2016

PENSION TAX PASSES

Duval County voters handed Mayor Lenny Curry a runaway win by approving a half-cent sales tax that would be dedicated to paying down Jacksonville's massive pension debt. Curry hailed the result as a "historic day for our city" that will put the city's pension crisis behind it. **Story, A-5**



PUBLIC DEFENDER
261 of 261 precincts reporting

CHARLIE COFER
75%
93,007

MATT SHIRK 30,307 25%

STATE ATTORNEY
261 of 261 precincts reporting

MELISSA NELSON
64%
83,667

ANGELA COREY	34,370	26%
WESLEY WHITE	12,396	10%

U.S. CONGRESS DISTRICT 4
178 of 178 precincts reporting

JOHN RUTHERFORD
39%
38,594

LAKE RAY	20,059	20%
HANS TANZLER	18,975	19%
BILL McCLURE	9,840	10%
ED MALIN	7,862	8%

U.S. CONGRESS DISTRICT 5
266 of 266 precincts reporting

AL LAWSON
48%
39,266

CORRINE BROWN	31,997	39%
LaSHONDA HOLLOWAY	10,973	13%

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INCUMBENTS OUT

CORRINE BROWN
Could not win newly drawn congressional district

ANGELA COREY
Her eight-year reign as state attorney ends

MATT SHIRK
The embattled public defender was blown out



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U.S. Rep. Corrine Brown greets supporters as she makes a brief appearance at her campaign headquarters Tuesday in Jacksonville.



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State Attorney Angela Corey talks to the media at a results party at Fraternal Order of Police headquarters in Jacksonville on Tuesday.



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Public Defender for the 4th Judicial Circuit Matt Shirk during an interview with The Florida Times-Union editorial board in April 2015.

The Times-Union

Voters upended the Northeast Florida political order Tuesday in a series of historic party primaries, ousting the two controversial and nationally derided leaders of the region's criminal justice system and removing its best-known Democrat from Congress.

U.S. Rep. Corrine Brown, a storied and fiery Jacksonville politician who had not lost a campaign since winning a state House seat in 1982, conceded defeat in the Democratic primary to Al Lawson of Tallahassee in a newly redrawn 5th Congressional District. Brown waged a poorly funded and distracted effort in communities farther west where she had never before campaigned and where Lawson trounced her.

Lawson, largely unknown in Jacksonville until the summer, is virtually certain to win the heavily Democratic district in November. And Brown will leave public office amid a particularly challenging and separate struggle: She is under indictment on 22 federal fraud charges, which imperils her political and personal future.

With Brown out, Jacksonville's political clout is seriously diminished. U.S. Rep. Ander Crenshaw, the city's other senior member of Congress, is retiring.

Former Jacksonville Sheriff John Rutherford won the Republican primary Tuesday to replace him and is heavily favored to prevail in November in the traditionally conservative district.

Meanwhile, State Attorney Angela Corey and Public Defender Matt Shirk were blown out in Republican primaries by challengers who had zero public profiles just months ago but rode to victory on waves of disenchantment and frustration.

Corey, who had become nationally known for a series of high-profile cases for which she came under intense criticism, never seemed to find much traction against Melissa Nelson, a former prosecutor and private attorney supported by large parts of the legal community fed up with the incumbent.

Shirk seemed to be embattled throughout most of his two terms, including recent scrutiny on a national level for a pattern of shoddy service to the office's indigent clients. That caught up to him Tuesday. Charlie Cofer, a former judge, routed Shirk and won 75 percent of the vote.

Nelson promised to restore fairness and accountability to the State Attorney's Office. Cofer said he would restore dignity and competence as public defender. They are almost certain to have their chances to try. They face only write-in candidates in November. **STORIES ON A-4, A-5**

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DAILY DEAL!

Bad to the Bone Pet Care: Get a deal on stay-in-your-home pet sitting **Details, A-2**

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Pension Tax Referendum

Curry's shoe leather brings victory

Mayor hit the campaign trail, buoyed by \$2.1M for pension tax effort

By David Bauerlein
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The historic campaign for a half-cent sales tax to tackle Jacksonville's crushing pension debt started four months ago with the biggest share of voters in the undecided camp, but it ended Tuesday with a resounding victory for Mayor Lenny Curry and the powerhouse Yes for Jacksonville committee.

"Here's to Jacksonville, baby," Curry said as he joined other city leaders in a joyous champagne toast at the Hyatt Regency Riverfront in downtown.

The tax was championed by Curry and the well-oiled Yes for Jacksonville political committee, which marshaled a \$2.1 million campaign operation featuring consultants from Curry's winning 2015 mayoral campaign, pollsters, and wave after wave of ads on television, social media and in the mail.

Curry hit the campaign trail as well, making dozens of appearances at town halls to field questions about how the plan would work. The measure passed with 65 percent support.

At the election night celebration, Curry said pension costs have been "breaking our backs" and he entered office in July 2015 determined to lead on the "biggest issues of the

day, and that's what tonight represents."

"I'm not standing up here tonight to celebrate in a big way," Curry said. "This is big for our city, but I expected to be in the end zone tonight because it's my job to win for the people of Jacksonville."

Curry's message boiled down to saying the half-cent sales tax is the best of a series of unpleasant options, but it would give Jacksonville a long-sought dedicated source of funding to pay down the \$2.85 billion pension debt that is a boulder-sized weight on the neck of the city's finances, choking the ability to make needed investments in the city's quality of life.

The half-cent sales tax would not start until after the existing half-cent for the Better Jacksonville Plan expires at the end of 2030, a feature that Curry touted as a benefit by saying it wouldn't be a tax increase — the overall sales tax rate is 7 cents now and it would still be 7 cents for future taxpayers.

Opponents took aim at the referendum by saying the city would be saddling the next generation with pension costs rather than tackling the problem head-on by raising taxes now or using current revenues.

Part of Curry's plan would defer a chunk of the city's pension costs until after the sales tax starts. While that would provide budget relief in the range of \$50 million per year until 2031, paying less would



City Councilman Tommy Hazouri (center) and Mayor Lenny Curry hug after Tuesday's passage of the half-cent sales tax at the Hyatt Regency Jacksonville Riverfront.

ultimately result in the city paying far more over the long run, according to financial projections.

The plan also drew fire from some pastors who blasted the lack of specifics for how the sales tax would result in improvements for long-suffering northwest Jacksonville neighborhoods.

The Duval County Democratic Party Executive Committee, the Concerned Taxpayers of Duval County, state Sen. Audrey Gibson and state Rep. Mia Jones all took stands against the sales tax.

But Curry could point to the unanimous support of City Council members — Democrats and Repub-

licans alike — while also highlighting a cross section of support that encompassed public employee unions and business-oriented organizations like JAX Chamber and the Jacksonville Civic Council.

Despite having a huge campaign war chest, Curry faced an uphill climb because the campaign started with a mere 33 percent of residents in support, 25 percent opposed and a whopping 42 percent undecided when the University of North Florida Public Opinion Research Lab did a poll in early May. As the campaign gained traction, undecided voters broke strongly for the sales tax.

The half-cent sales tax

devoted to paying down the city's pension debt would be the first of its kind in Florida, and just getting it onto the ballot required intense lobbying in the Capital. The Legislature, which typically sends bills to a quiet death if they have anything to do with taxes, signed off on allowing the referendum. Gov. Rick Scott signed the bill into law in March.

Edward Waters College President Nat Glover, who served as co-chair of the Yes for Jacksonville committee, said Curry could have waited until his second term to confront the pension issue.

"He had the courage to step out and take this

on early in his political career," Glover told the crowd.

The idea of extending the half-cent sales tax and using that future revenue to pay the city's \$2.85 billion pension debt was the brainchild of Mike Weinstein, a veteran of city politics who first raised it in an interview with the Times-Union in early 2014. After Curry won the mayor's race last year, he brought in Weinstein as his finance director and they discussed the idea in an initial meeting that turned to the city's pension costs.

"I am very pleased the city of Jacksonville will have an opportunity — we still have steps to go — will have an opportunity to put the pension liability behind us, and I'm glad to be part of a successful team," Weinstein said as he watched the celebration unfold at the victory party.

Chief Administrative Officer Sam Mousa said Curry's decision to embrace the idea made it a reality.

"We had a leader with enough guts to do it," Mousa said.

The next step for Curry will be collective bargaining to close at least one of the three pension plans — police and fire, general employees, and corrections officers — to new hires, which is a requirement of the state law allowing the referendum. Another provision will require all employees to pay at least 10 percent toward their pension. Most pay now at 8 percent.

U.S. Congress, District 5



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U.S. Rep. Corrine Brown (right) greets supporters at her campaign headquarters Tuesday night.

It's over for Corrine Brown

Al Lawson ousts longtime representative in redrawn 5th District

By Steve Patterson
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Embattled U.S. Rep. Corrine Brown lost her bid for a 13th term in Congress on Tuesday, outpolled by former state Sen. Al Lawson while a federal fraud trial loomed ahead of her.

With 83 percent of the precincts in U.S. House District 5 counted, Lawson held 52 percent of the vote to 35 percent for Brown, the rest going to LaShonda "L.J." Holloway.

Brown's 1992 election to Congress ended 117 years of no African-American Floridian being sent to Congress.

"It has been an honor serving the people," Brown said, adding her constituents learned to expect personalized attention.

Brown said she was proud of the legacy of projects, including roadwork representing billions of dollars, that she emphasized during her campaign. She said the main lesson of the primary was that Democrats must turn out in larger numbers for the

general election "or we all will have sad faces."

Tuesday's loss was Brown's first in more than 30 years.

After losing in a 1980 bid to enter the Florida House of Representatives, she held a seat in the Legislature from 1982 to 1992, when she entered Congress in a carefully drawn minority-access district.

Brown's loss, coinciding with U.S. Rep. Ander Crenshaw's retirement, means Northeast Florida's senior House member may be U.S. Rep. Ted Yoho, who first took office in 2013 and faces a November general election challenge.

Lawson is an insurance agent and lobbyist who served 28 years in the Florida Legislature, building a base of support in Tallahassee and rural communities close to the Georgia border.

"I promise to be a leader District 5 can trust and to work hard to deliver for the people of North Florida," Lawson said as supporters in Tallahassee celebrated his win in the Democratic Party primary for the Fifth Congressional District.

In November, Lawson faces Republican Glo Smith of Clay County, who



Lawson

challenged Brown in 2014 when the 5th Congressional District snaked from Jacksonville to Orlando in a winding route a judge later ruled violated the state constitution's Fair Districts amendment against gerrymandering.

The district, which Brown defended through repeated court challenges, was redrawn last year to run from Jacksonville almost 200 miles to Gadsden County west of Tallahassee.

Lawson, who had run for Congress twice since leaving the Legislature in 2010, was a familiar figure in the western end of the redrawn 5th District and was able to mobilize volunteers and donors.

A committee hosting a Lawson fundraiser this month included lobbyists, former Tallahassee Mayor John Marks and a former CEO of the influential Associated Industries of Florida.

Brown trailed in efforts to organize support in the redrawn district, with resources and attention

also taken up by a continued court fight about the district boundaries and a federal investigation of Brown's personal finances.

In July, she was indicted on 22 charges that involved mail and wire fraud, lying on income tax forms and concealing income on financial disclosure forms members of Congress have to complete.

Prosecutors said Brown and her chief of staff, Ronnie Simmons, were part of a conspiracy that controlled a slush fund from an organization Brown championed as a charity, One Door for Education. Prosecutors said One Door, billed as a scholarship fund, collected \$800,000 in donations while granting just two small scholarships.

Brown has denied all charges and is currently scheduled for trial in November, though that date is likely to be pushed back.

Publicity about the indictment helped dry up money from people and committees that were once supporters, and Brown wrote in a blog posting last week her campaign was "almost out of time and money."

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U.S. Senate

Rubio, Murphy to face off Nov. 8

Showdown could be key in determining majority party in D.C.

By Brendan Farrington & Gary Fineout
Associated Press



Rubio

Murphy

TALLAHASSEE | Republican Sen. Marco Rubio and Democratic U.S. Rep. Patrick Murphy each easily won their Senate primaries Tuesday, setting up a November showdown that's guaranteed to be nasty as each party grapples for a majority in the chamber.

Rubio, who decided at the last second to seek a second term, easily fended off millionaire homebuilder Carlos Beruff and Murphy used the backing of President Barack Obama and other Democratic leaders to defeat U.S. Rep. Alan Grayson, who was counting on his party's most faithful liberal voters to overcome Murphy's money and establishment support.

Elsewhere, U.S. Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz, who recently resigned as Democratic National Committee chair, won her primary — the first tough race since being elected to Congress in 2004.

Rubio's and Murphy's victory speeches set the tone for the Senate race.

"Marco Rubio is the worst of Washington because he puts himself first every time. He gave up on his job. He gave up on Florida. He earned the worst voting record for any Florida senator in 50 years," Murphy said shortly after polls closed.

Rubio spoke about an hour later and said Murphy has lied about his education and his career and is only successful because of his wealthy father.

"How can someone with that kind of record think he can be elected to the U.S. Senate? The answer is he has a sense of entitlement, because when everything you've ever had in your life is

given to you, you think you deserve it all," Rubio said.

Rubio had declared during his failed presidential campaign that he would not run again for Senate. But he nearly cleared what had been a crowded GOP field with his last-minute turnaround.

Beruff rolled the dice to see if the anti-establishment mood powering Donald Trump's presidential campaign could send him to Washington as well. But after spending \$8 million of his own money and going nowhere in the polls, he essentially shut down his campaign ahead of the primary.

Democrats hope to gain seats in Florida's heavily Republican House delegation after court-mandated redistricting chipped away the advantages of some incumbents.

Florida had to redraw its congressional maps after they were found to violate the state constitution's provision requiring compact districts that don't favor incumbents or political parties. That spurred one of the state's most heavily contested congressional election years. Several races were essentially decided in the primary and Florida will eventually send at least seven new House members to Washington.

Republicans now outnumber Democrats 17-10 in the state's congressional delegation. If Democrats sweep all four seats in November, that Republican advantage could be reduced to 14-13.

One of those is now held by U.S. Rep. David Jolly, a Republican who was expected to win Tuesday, but who would then have to beat former Gov. Charlie Crist, who used to be a Republican but is now a Democrat.