

Hayes loses to Kissell



Congressman Robin Hayes speaks to his supporters with his wife, Barbara, at his side after calling his opponent Larry Kissell to congratulate him during an election party at the Speedway Club Tuesday, November 4, 2008.

Bridgett Baker / bbaker@independenttribune.com

Related Links

- [Kissell ready to start legislative career](#)
- [Local election results](#)

By [Eric Deines](#) | Independent Tribune

Published: November 5, 2008

CONCORD - Amid the unwavering support of family, friends and volunteers, Congressman Robin Hayes (R) conceded his 8th District seat to two-time Democratic challenger Larry Kissell, ending a 10-year run in U.S. House of Representatives.

"This is not the night we had planned for," said Hayes, who conceded the race with his wife Barbara by his side. "But it's the night that happens sometimes."

Hayes, 63, who as of midnight Tuesday earned 55 percent of 8th District votes to Kissell's 55 percent, said he called Kissell to congratulate him on his victory around 10:30 p.m. on election night.

Hayes, a Concord native and son of textile magnate Charles A. Cannon said his loss followed a trend of

a strong Democratic wave across the country.

"As you look across this country, it was not a good year for Republicans," Hayes said. "I don't think it filtered down. I think it came pouring down."

Hayes said the early called loss of Sen. Elizabeth Dole (R) to State Sen. Kay Hagan (D) and a heavy Democrat turnout gave him concern about his own campaign.

"As you travel around and see the turnout that seems to favor the straight-ticket, Democratic voters, you're not over-confident," Hayes said.

In 2006, Hayes beat out Kissell by a mere 329 votes, pushing the race into a closely-watched canvass and a district-wide recount.

That close finish led to Kissell's strong, better-financed campaign in 2008. And polls released in the weeks leading up to the election showed Kissell ahead by a slight margin.

In his Tuesday night conversation with Kissell, Hayes said he offered all his staff's services to Kissell. "There's a lot of case work to coordinate between offices," Hayes said. "I want (Kissell) to be successful for at least two years."

Hayes supporter Darrell Bost, 71, also said he credited early voting and a shaky economy to Hayes' defeat.

"I don't think he got enough support where he needed it," Bost said. "They missed him voting straight Democrat. Republicans got the blame for (the recent economic downturn), but it wasn't their fault. It wouldn't have been different either way."

Bost said Hayes brought a personal touch to his campaign that had much to do with the humanist character of his family, which has made large charitable donations to organizations around the state.

"I think about what his family has done for the area. And he's done so much for the area," Bost said.

Hayes expected to trail initially Tuesday due to heavy Democratic votes in early voting, but failed to close the gap.

"We've squeezed down but we've got a big hill to climb after the early voting," Hayes said as numbers came in.

Hayes hinged his campaign on keen insight of the large 8th District and his hope to create jobs in alternative fuels; in the defense industry; and in biotech.

A verbal gaffe Hayes made at a mid-October rally for Republican presidential candidate Sen. John McCain in Concord drew the ire of some critics in the final weeks of the election.

"Liberals hate real Americans that work, and accomplish, and achieve, and believe in God," Hayes said, referencing liberal bloggers' criticism of Republican vice-presidential candidate Sarah Palin.

When local media reported the remark, Hayes' staff initially denied having made the statement. Later, Hayes would say the comment was taken out of context.

"If there are any liberals in the room today, I want to make sure you feel the love," Hayes said to a room of Cabarrus business and government leaders the week following his comment.

Reports then said that the Republican Party had pulled funding from the campaign.

As he made his concession speech Tuesday, a supporter shouted, "Whenever you're ready to do it again, we're ready to do it again."

And Hayes didn't shy away from the notion.

"I don't think I'm over the hill yet," Hayes said. "It's certainly worth considering."

- Contact reporter Eric C. Deines at 704-789-9141

Find this article at:

<http://www2.independenttribune.com/content/2008/nov/05/hayes-loses-kissell/news-local>

Check the box to include the list of links referenced in the article.

©2008 Media General Inc. All Rights Reserved.

[Member agreement](#) and [privacy statement](#)