

Farry credits campaign efforts

Intense door-to-door campaigning helped overcome the Obama factor, said the successful challenger.

By CHRIS ENGLISH
STAFF WRITER

When he stepped in to run for state representative in the 142nd District, Republican challenger Frank Farry decided to take his campaign directly to the people, home by home and person by person.

More than 13,000 door knocks later, he's on his way to Harrisburg.

Farry, 35, toppled Democratic incumbent Chris King by more than 1,000 votes in Tuesday's election. One of the big keys to victory, Farry said, was all that personal contact with constituents that swayed many undecided voters and overcame the Democratic tide led by President-elect Barack Obama.

"I didn't knock on every door in the district, but I think I got most of them," said Farry, an attorney, fire chief and former assistant township manager in Middletown.

"I was out there seven days a week and spent a tremendous amount of time in the community," he continued. "For those who didn't know me, I gave them a chance to see me face to face and get to know me and what my message was."

The crux of that message, said Farry, was that he's spent his entire adult life serving the local community and would continue to put those interests first as a state representative. During the campaign, Farry drew a distinction between himself and King. While both grew up in Middletown and graduated from Neshaminy High School, Farry maintained his strong community ties and stayed around to live and work in the area while King went to Harrisburg to work in state government.

"I think everyone agrees Chris is a nice guy and has worked hard for this district and to be a reformer," Farry said. "But these are tough times, and I think many people want a different kind of mentality in Harrisburg, even more of a questioning-the-business-as-usual attitude. And I think they saw that in me."

King, 32, used many of those change-the-status-quo arguments when he unseated Republican incumbent Matt Wright in 2006.

"It was an honor and a privilege to serve the community I grew up in," King said in an email. "It was a wonderful learning experience for me and I am most thankful for the opportunity I had to work day in and day out with the incredibly talented and compassionate people who ran my district office."

He continued: "My opponent in this campaign worked hard and had a great deal of support. I wish him well as the new state representative, I have no doubt that he too will put our community first by turning down the outlandish legislative perks like the per diem payments and cost of living increases and fight to restore people's confidence in our state government."

Farry stepped in as the Republican candidate in February when former congressman Michael Fitzpatrick withdrew because of a family medical issue.

Chief of the Langhorne-Middletown Fire Co. and a volunteer firefighter for almost 20 years, Farry said he received tremendous support from emergency service workers in the district, many of whom campaigned for him and put up "Emergency Services for Farry" signs on their front lawns.

"Clearly Frank has established many personal relationships in his time as a firefighter and that's branched out to other parts of the emergency services world," said Ryan Marte, president of the Langhorne-Middletown Fire Co. and Farry's friend.

Bucks County Democratic Chairman John Cordisco said an "ugly negative campaign put forth by Farry's people" in the last two weeks before the election contributed to King's defeat. Cordisco didn't offer specifics.

"Chris put forth a very positive campaign," said Cordisco "Our decision not to address [Farry's negative campaigning] might have impacted the result."

The negativity went both ways, said Farry, who added he believed everything distributed by his campaign was factual.

"Once they started running negative TV commercials, we had to respond with information we felt the public needed to know about Chris' record," Farry said. "There were people handing out negative pieces attacking me at the polls on Election Day. Chris and I both stated publicly we weren't happy with some of the things coming out of both of our campaigns from Harrisburg. Perhaps in two years, my opponent and I can both agree to stay away from that sort of thing." King represents Langhorne, Langhorne Manor, Hulmeville, Penndel, most of Middletown and most of Lower Southampton. Chris English can be reached at 215-949-4193 or .

