

Decision '96

Christensen enjoys easy win, thanks opponent



By JOSHUA GILLIN
Senior Editor

OMAHA — Republican Jon Christensen enjoyed a comfortable win Tuesday, two years after a narrow victory over a Democratic incumbent.

Christensen, 33, easily defeated challenger James Martin Davis, a 50-year-old Omaha attorney, to retain Nebraska's 2nd District seat in the U.S. House of Representatives.

In 1994, he gained 1,443 votes more than three-term incumbent Peter Hoagland.

As of early this morning Christensen had 56.6 percent of the vote to Davis' 40.6 percent. Christensen had received 119,232 votes, while Davis captured only 85,586 votes.

"In this race, (we were) ready to talk about the issues," Christensen said. "And believe me, no one is happier than I am that the race stayed positive. It's because of the issues that we won."

"Tonight, Nebraskans voted for someone, not against someone," he said.

Christensen, who rose quickly in the House ranks during his first two years in office, said he was ready to work hard to represent Nebraskans and their families.

"This is not an end, this is the beginning," he said. "There's a lot of hard work to do."

Davis conceded victory to Christensen shortly before 9 p.m. Christensen gave his victory speech not

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JON CHRISTENSEN
2nd District Representative

long after receiving Davis' phone call, jovially claiming his respect for the Democrat.

"He (Davis) worked hard, and I want to continue to thank him for running the kind of race that he did," Christensen said.

The freshman Republican's victory marked the end of a heated campaign full of disagreements. Christensen's campaign focused on support for tax relief, a balanced budget amendment and stronger sentencing for criminals.

Christensen had argued that his proposed fight on crime was trivialized by Davis, citing Davis' questioning of Christensen's credentials and ability to effectively institute proposed changes.

Christensen voted to repeal the federal ban on the possession of assault weapons. In defense of his actions, he said stronger sentencing was essential for fighting crime.

As a member of the House Ways and Means Committee, the freshman representative also voted for last year's defeated balanced budget amendment and praised former Republican presidential challenger Bob Dole's proposed 15-percent tax cut.

U.S. House 2nd District

85% of precincts reporting

James M. Davis (D) 42%
85,586

★ Jon Christensen (R) 58%
119,232

Christensen will return to the House for his second term.

Christensen's re-election marks the second-consecutive term Nebraska has had an all-Republican House delegation. Republicans Doug Bereuter and Bill Barrett also won their districts by considerable margins.

Before Christensen's victory over Hoagland, Nebraska had not had an all-Republican delegation since 1988, when 2nd District Representative Hal Daub resigned to run for the U.S. Senate.

FRESHMAN U.S. REP. Jon Christensen talks to one of his younger supporters at a victory rally in Omaha Tuesday night. The Republican defeated Democratic challenger James Martin Davis to capture the 2nd District U.S. House seat.

DANIEL J. LUEDERT/DN

Campaign spending, not issues, key to Republican win, Davis says

By BRIAN CARLSON
Staff Reporter

James Martin Davis conceded defeat Tuesday night, but the Democratic candidate praised his own campaign for taking the "high road" and bringing the public's attention to vital policy issues.

Saying it was "better to lose with honor than to win with shame," Davis, 50, an Omaha attorney, said he had accomplished his goal of avoiding a negative campaign against U.S. Rep. Jon Christensen.

He mentioned the swashbuckling campaign waged between Christensen, 33, a native of St. Paul, and then-incumbent Rep. Peter Hoagland in 1994.

"We made politics — at least at the Congressional level — a little bit better in Omaha, Nebraska," he said.

Davis lost in the race for Nebraska's 2nd Congressional District seat by an unofficial count of 56.5 percent to 40.6 percent, according to results at 2 a.m. today.

He delivered his concession speech at 9:05 p.m. at the Democratic Party's rally in Omaha at the Holiday Inn on

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An educated populace is the quickest way to elevate society."

JAMES MARTIN DAVIS
2nd District Democratic congressional candidate

72nd and Grover streets.

Davis said he would continue his career as a trial lawyer now that Election Day is past. Standing by his wife Sarah and his daughter Victoria, Davis thanked his supporters for "a lifetime worth of memories."

But in interviews following his speech, Davis criticized Christensen's campaign tactics. He compared the freshman Republican's campaign advertisements to "Chinese water torture," and said money, not issues, decided the outcome.

He noted that Christensen spent 10 times as much money as the Davis campaign in the Omaha district. That amount was equal to Gov. Ben Nelson's campaign spending in his unsuccessful statewide bid for U.S.

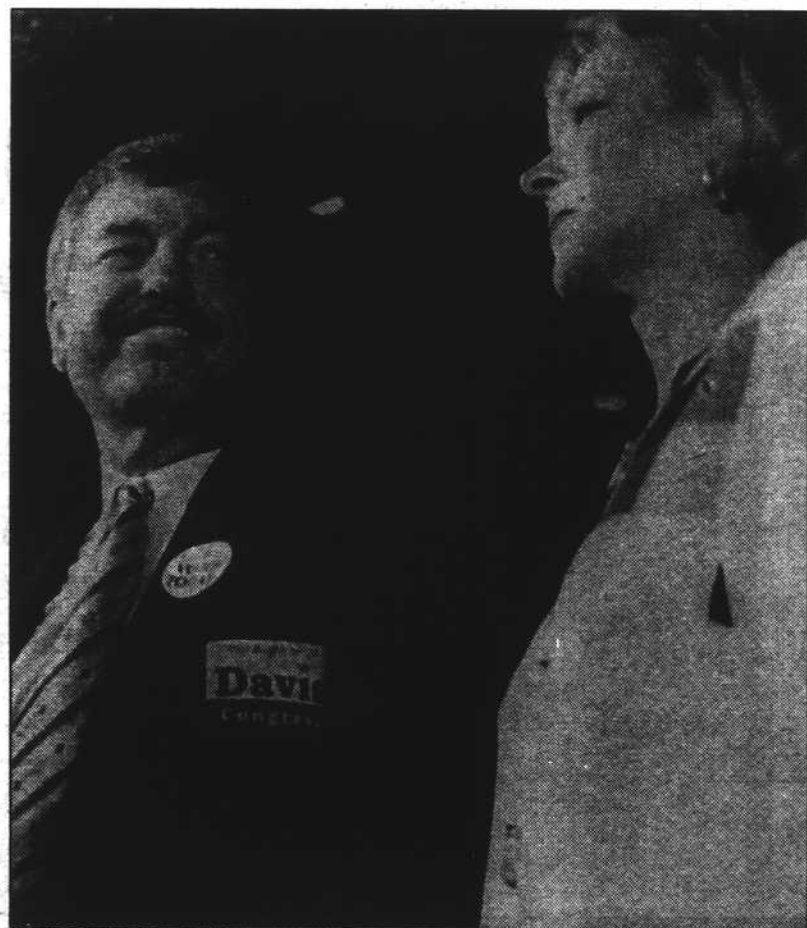
Senate.

The result, Davis said, was that too many voters received their information solely from political advertisements and 30-second sound bites, rather than from newspapers and in-depth news programs.

"We were swamped by a tidal wave of special interest money," he said. "This was an issue-oriented campaign, but it was not decided by the issues."

Davis said he felt his campaign had focused public attention on a variety of important issues, especially education.

"An educated populace is the quickest way to elevate society," he said. "I think we definitely got the word out that we don't need to be cutting the Department of Education."



LANE HICKENBOTTOM/DN

JAMES MARTIN DAVIS smiles and stands by his wife Sarah after he conceded defeat to U.S. Rep. Jon Christensen Tuesday during a Clinton triumphs in electoral landslides for Democratic candidates in Omaha.

Barrett credits loyal voters for sweep of 3rd District

Republican winner did not use television advertising in House race.

By KASEY KERBER
Senior Reporter

Without a single television advertisement, Republican incumbent Bill Barrett won the 3rd District U.S. House



Barrett

"I'm naturally pleased," Barrett said. "I'm humbled."

Webster, 60, a farmer from Gibbon, said if he had begun his campaign in

February and raised at least \$250,000 in funds, the outcome could have been different.

Barrett, 67, a three-term representative from Lexington, said he was happy with the outcome.

"We had a message to carry, and we carried it," Webster said, "but we still didn't have the name recognition."

Barrett did.

"We had a good, low-key campaign

with no advertisements on television," Barrett said. "We advertised in newspapers and on the radio, but that was about it."

Webster said he had not yet decided whether he would run for the 3rd District seat in the next election.

As Barrett heads into his fourth term, he credits his campaign success to loyal voters.

"It might be fair to say that people of the 3rd District have liked what they've seen."

U.S. House 3rd District

85% of precincts reporting

John Webster (D) 23%
44,176

★ Bill Barrett (R) 77%
151,344

Barrett heads back to House for a fourth term.