

## Scandals Don't Drive Turnout for Primary Election

by {ga=dking}

Friday, September 14, 2012 01:26 PM

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ALBANY, N.Y. — Weeks of front-page scandal was not enough to drive voters to the polls in droves as yesterday's primary saw most incumbents re-elected by comfortable margins.

In New York City, the Democratic enrollment is so strong that most legislative races are decided in the primary rather than in the general election. However, a few heated contests remain for the general election, including [the race](#) between Sen. [Joseph Addabbo](#) and Councilman [Eric Ulrich](#)

But the majority of city residents now know who will be representing them come next year.

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Not every every scandal-ridden politician survived unscathed. Sen. Shirley Huntley, [indicted for forging documents](#) in a conspiracy to defraud the state, lost to Councilman [James Sanders](#) by 4,979 votes to 3,477. And Assemblywoman Naomi Rivera, [accused of appointing unqualified](#) lovers to government positions they were unqualified to do, lost her seat to [Mark Gjonaj](#) by 2,407 votes to 1,894, with two other challengers drawing votes in the hundreds.

In both races only a fraction of eligible voters made it to the polls. It's also worth noting that both incumbents were the focus of many front page stories in the lead-up to the election.

In Brooklyn, pundits who expected those associated with scandal-plagued Assemblyman Vito Lopez would suffer brutal defeat were proven wrong as Sen. [Martin Dilan](#) easily bested challenger [Jason Otaño](#). And, as of writing, the [face of the Brooklyn reform movement](#), Democratic District Leader Lincoln Restler, was [trailing](#) the Lopez-backed Chris Olechowski by a few hundred votes. While it was Lopez's machine doing the work, it's clear voters weren't inclined to punish everyone associated with the legislator.

As was expected, Assemblyman [William Boyland](#) was able to overcome the taint of his federal bribery indictment and the fact that he was one of the worst legislative records in the state thanks to the [multitude of his challengers](#). Six challengers split the vote allowing Boyland another term in the Assembly — however long it might last.

In non-scandal voting news, Sen. [Adriano Espaillat](#) handily defeated his challenger and long-time rival [Guillermo Linares](#). Espaillat took in 64 percent of the vote to Linares' 36. Two major influences seem to have been [at play in the race](#). One, Espaillat clearly improved his brand and name recognition with his failed run against

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Rep. Charles Rangel and, two, Espaillat's tactic of painting of Linares as a [traitor to their shared Dominican heritage](#) because of his support of Rangel worked despite the brief backlash Espaillat suffered in the press.

Upstate races told some interesting stories as well. Nine-term incumbent Sen. [Neil Breslin](#) easily dispatched his challenger, Albany County Legislator

[Shawn Morse](#)

, in an

[ugly and personal race](#)

. The Gazette

[reported earlier this year](#)

that Morse had the support of the Independent Democratic Conference. The IDC is led by Sen. Jeffrey Klein, who leads the breakaway faction of Democrats that tend to vote with the Republican Majority on major legislation. Senate Republicans see the IDC as an insurance policy against any Democratic gains this November. The IDC funneled major financial support to Morse, but in the end it proved futile. The Breslin name is simply ubiquitous in Albany politics. Gov. Andrew Cuomo also took the rare step of endorsing Breslin. After declaring victory, Breslin said he hoped the IDC would consider coming back to the Democratic fold.

Albany County District Attorney [David Soares](#) won an ugly primary contest against [Lee Kindlon](#)

Soares has unique abilities to prosecute Albany legislators because of his Albany County jurisdiction. Soares drew the ire of Cuomo earlier this year when he refused to prosecute any of the Occupy Albany protesters who were camped out in parks next to the capitol.

Gay rights supporters who had been anxiously watching primary contests between Republicans who broke with party ranks and voted for same-sex marriage and their conservative challengers didn't get a clear message after polls closed. In the 43rd State Senate District, Sen. Roy McDonald and challenger Kathy Marchione are [separated by only a few hundred votes](#). About 1,000 absentee ballots will help to decide the race. Marchione has the backing of the Conservative Party.

Absentee ballots will also likely [decide the 41st State Senate District contest](#) between Sen. Steve Saland and Neil Di Carlo.

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Saland not only broke ranks to vote for same-sex marriage, but was involved in crafting the bill so that other Republicans could feel comfortable voting for it. “The people in District 41 showed tonight that they want a socially and fiscally conservative state senator to represent them,” Di Carlo told reporters Thursday. “Sen. Saland has been desensitized to the liberal agenda.”

Meanwhile, Mark Grisanti who was expected to have a tough time keeping his seat in the 60th State Senate District, [defeated challenger Kevin Stocker handily](#) . Grisanti was the target of a graphic anti-gay flyer during the last week of the campaign. Stocker denied any involvement.

[The National Organization for Marriage](#) is touting victory despite the fact that two of the races are undecided and is even claiming that it was the issue of same-sex marriage that led to Huntley’s defeat — although Sanders didn’t have much to say on the issue during the campaign.

“The primary results were the beginning of what is sure to be a spirited and engaging campaign season leading up to the November general election,” the [Empire State Pride Agenda](#) said in a statement.