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NEWS, 3A

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Congressional District 2 Democratic candidate Amanda Marie Green and Republican candidate Austin Rogers



Can Dems bridge rural divide in FL's U.S. House District 2?

James Call
USA TODAY NETWORK - FLORIDA

Democrat Amanda Green and Republican Austin Rogers won their party nominations Aug. 18, setting up a November showdown in Florida's open 2nd Congressional District seat, a race with implications for control of the U.S. House.

Incumbent Rep. Neal Dunn, R-Panama City, is retiring after representing the Panhandle-to-the-Big Bend district for 10 years.

CD 2 stretches from the Alabama line to Dixie County and is one of the state's poorest districts, a 200-mile region of forests and farmlands that in-

cludes Tallahassee and Panama City, two cities that rarely vote together.

CD 2 is three political arenas

CD 2 is three political districts stitched together in 16 largely rural counties where economic struggles, health care access and agriculture dominate local concerns. Though it is a single congressional district, it contains three distinct political arenas: Tallahassee, Panama City, and the countryside in between.

Green and Rogers' campaign mission is to bridge those divides. Democrats see the open seat an opportunity to compete in a district anchored by

Tallahassee's growing population, while Republicans are counting on the conservative rural counties and Panama City area that have powered GOP victories for the past decade.

How Green and Rogers navigate the district's distinct regional interests will determine who succeeds Dunn, and whether CD 2 remains a reliably Republican seat.

What candidates say to voters depend on where they are: Green and Rogers will engage voters in three different conversations as the campaign unfolds.

In Democratic-leaning Leon

See **DEMOCRATS**, Page 4A

GOP primary voter turnout lapped Dems

John Pacenti
USA TODAY NETWORK - FLORIDA

Florida Democrats saw a favorable political landscape heading into the 2026 primary. President Donald Trump is at record low approval numbers, special elections wins this year indicated a throw-the-bums-out disposition among the electorate.

And yet, based on the primary turnout numbers, the state party came up short.

Republicans ended up with a 437,723-vote advantage when the dust settled. Overall turnout was actually down 0.8% from the 2022 midterm. Republicans out-performed Democrats in 58 of 67 counties. But one analyst said the numbers can be deceiving and that Democrats held their ground against the GOP.

One reason for a possible lack of enthusiasm for Dems, is that the party didn't really have competitive high-profile races. On the other side, even though the GOP Republican

See **TURNOUT**, Page 2A



Voters arrive and depart the Supervisor of Elections on primary Election Day in West Palm Beach, Florida, on August, 18.

GREG LOVETT/PALM BEACH POST

Massive fire levels Jaws Souvenirs in Panama City Beach



Jaws Souvenirs burns in Panama City Beach on Aug. 21.

PROVIDED BY THE BAY COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

Dylan Gentile
Panama City News Herald
USA TODAY NETWORK

A large fire at a prominent tourist store prompted a significant emergency response the morning of Aug. 21.

The blaze broke out at Jaws Souvenirs, 7100 Thomas Drive in Panama City Beach. Bay County fire crews arrived at 6:04 a.m., responding to a call that went out at 5:59 a.m. A video posted by Bay County Emergency Services shows flames erupting from most of the roof.

Panama City Fire Rescue, Panama

City Beach Fire Rescue, BCES, and Naval Support Activity Panama City fire teams all responded.

By the time the fire was put out, the video shows that most of the building had burned. Exterior walls were still standing, but it appears the roof was claimed. Broadcasters reported that the structure was a total loss.

"The building was basically full involved on arrival," said Bay County Deputy Chief Curt Isakson. "So far no firefighter injuries and no reported

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