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### **(Neb)-Smith Margin In GOP Primary Smaller Than Usual, But Still Big**

By: John Axtell Posted at: 05/16/2018 11:27 AM

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) - 3rd District Republican Congressman Adrian Smith of Gering easily won the nomination for a 7th term, but the margin was his smallest since claiming a 5-way primary when the seat was open in 2006.

Smith still took nearly 2/3rds of the vote in a 4-way race, with Aurora small business executive Kirk Penner at 26%; Grand Island farmer Arron Kowalski 6%, and Alliance property manager and author Larry Lee Scott Bolinger 3%.

Smith is a huge favorite in the general election as he faces little-known Democrat Paul Theobald, unopposed in the primary.

Nebraska's two other congressmen, Republicans Jeff Fortenberry and Don Bacon were unopposed Tuesday but will have contested races this fall.

In the only congressional or statewide race that could be considered an upset, social worker Kara Eastman beat former Congressman Brad Ashford in the Democratic primary for the 2nd Congressional District by about 1,200 votes or 51% to 49%. Eastman now faces Bacon, who narrowly unseated Ashford two years ago.

Ashford, a one-time Republican who became the first Democrat to win the district in 20 years in 2014, presented himself as a centrist in the race, while Eastman ran as a progressive political newcomer in the toss-up district of Omaha and several Republican-leaning suburbs.

Former lab chemist Jessica McClure defeated Lincoln attorney Dennis Crawford 65%-35% for the Democratic nomination in the 1st Congressional District, where the 7-term Fortenberry looks to hold onto a seat the GOP has held for the last 52 years.