

ELECTIONS

James Buchanan scores easy win in Florida House District 74 race

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House District 74 incumbent James Buchanan easily defeated Democrat Lisa Stortstrom on Tuesday. [Herald-Tribune staff photo / Thomas Bender] [Herald-Tribune Staff Photo / Th.] [Herald-Tribune Staff Photo / Th.]

SARASOTA – Collecting nearly 62% of the votes, incumbent Florida House Republican James Buchanan coasted to an easy win over Democratic challenger and political novice Lisa Stortstrom Tuesday night in the District 74 race.

The Osprey resident and son of 14-year incumbent U.S. Rep. Vern Buchanan claimed 72,198 votes versus 44,273 for Stortstrom. It marked Buchanan's second consecutive rout in a legislative race.

"It's humbling to have an overwhelming number of folks in our community offer their support," he said. "We're thankful and excited about what's to come."

In 2018, during a campaign that also featured a third-party candidate, the 38-year-old real estate broker corralled 57% of the vote over Democrat Tony Mowry, who drew less than 41%.

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Earlier that year, Buchanan ran in a special election for a vacated seat in the District 72 state House but lost to Margaret Good by 7.4%. Good went on to challenge Buchanan's father, a 14-year incumbent in Congressional District 16, but was defeated Tuesday night.

"In a race like this, a lot of it comes down to enthusiasm, not only at the polls but the informal flag-waving and sign-waving and turnout at (Trump's) events," Buchanan said. "Not everybody saw what my wife and I saw on the ground during the campaign. It felt like we might have a red wave, that it looks like that's what happened."

Buchanan said his priorities for his fast-growing district will include infrastructure, water quality and a comprehensive plan for coastline resiliency.

At 53, Stortsman, a special-needs yoga instructor, was running her first political race. Although her campaign fundraising efforts were swamped by Buchanan's – the freshman legislator raised \$165,976.99, and she mustered \$8,969.40, according to state records – Stortsman was buoyed by the votes she got for a job that pays \$29,697 a year.



Democrat Lisa Stortstrom collected less than 38 percent of the vote in loss to James Buchanan for Florida House District 74 but is already planning to run for the office again. [Photo provided by Lisa Stortstrom] [Provided By Lisa Stortstrom]

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"I'm so excited I'm going to run again," said the former Montessori school science teacher. "I did this all on my own with a grassroots campaign. And I didn't start to run until late May."

Buffeted by the coronavirus when her Soul to Soul Yoga studio in Sarasota shut down in March, Stortstrom's clients are returning now, with the help of social distancing and masks. She campaigned for "clean jobs" and conservation.

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"Basically I want to see more services for people who are left out of government," said Stortstrom, contemplating going after the same job in 2022. "I want to take care of my people in special needs who are receiving 1 percent of the representation even though they're 20 percent of the population."

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