

## **Immigrant Obi Sium to challenge McCollum; GOP-endorsed House candidate poised to beat fugitive**

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### **Body**

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It looks like a foreign sounding name didn't matter to St. Paul-area Republicans in the primary.

With nearly 80 percent of the vote in, it looked like **Obi Sium**, an East African **immigrant** with the Republican endorsement for the 4th Congressional seat, had bested Jack Shepard, a Rome-based **fugitive** felon, at the polls. **Sium** had about 65 percent of the vote to Shepard's 35 percent. In other federal races, the results were less clear.

**Sium** had been concerned that his less American-sounding name might throw voters toward Shepard.

Shepard lives in Rome and has run for federal office three times. He is a former Minneapolis dentist with a 20-year-old outstanding felony arrest warrant against him.

He pleaded guilty in Hennepin County in 1979 and 1981 to two fourth-degree sexual assault and drug possession charges. In 1982, Shepard was accused of arson and failed to show up for a court hearing. He apparently has not returned to Minnesota since.

**Sium**, unlike Shepard, has been out shaking hands and campaigning in the district that includes all of Ramsey County and bits of Washington and Dakota counties.

Whoever wins the Republican primary will face an uphill fight for the seat. Democratic U.S. Rep. Betty **McCollum** has represented the district since 2000 and is expected to win the heavily Democratic district again this year.

"If the election was held today, there is no chance," **Sium** said. But the earnest former state Department of Natural Resources worker hopes his campaign issues — lower taxes, smaller government, improved educational opportunities — will win backers. "They are American ideals and principles they are neither Democratic or Republican principles."

If he wins the primary, **Sium** said he's hopeful he can get through the November election.

In the race for U.S. Sen. Mark Dayton's open seat, Republican U.S. Rep. Mark Kennedy, Democratic Hennepin County Attorney Amy Klobuchar and Independence Party's Robert Fitzgerald all have their parties' endorsements for the Senate race and all faced primary fights Tuesday.

Kennedy and Klobuchar, who have been running statewide television ads and campaigning across the state, were expected to easily survive their primaries against Republicans Harold Shudlick and John Uldrich and Democrat Darryl Stanton, respectively.

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Fitzgerald, who has been campaigning by driving across the state in a vegetable oil-fueled bus, might have a little more of a **challenge beating** Miles Collins and Stephen Williams because his name is less well-known than the DFL- or **GOP-endorsed candidates**.

Still, early results showed all three endorsed Senate **candidates** far ahead of their challengers.

- Three DFLers in the west suburban 3rd District are vying for the chance to face U.S. Rep. Jim Ramstad, a Republican, who is considered a pretty safe bet to win his November election. They are radio talk show host Wendy Wilde, marketing professional Gavin Sullivan and massage therapist Kevin Ray Smith. With about 16 percent of the vote in, Wilde was leading the other testers.
- In the 7th District, which runs along Minnesota's western border, DFLer Erik Thompson hopes people vote for him over U.S. Rep. Collin Peterson to show their anti-war fervor.
- In southern Minnesota's 1st District, Greg Mikkelsen of Lake Crystal is running to unseat U.S. Rep. Gil Gutknecht. Two years ago, Mikkelsen ran with the Independence Party for the seat. In 2002, he ran as a Green Party **candidate**.

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