District 36 Race Very Close - Again

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Jay Barrett/KMXT

It's déjà vu all over again for residents of Alaska House District 36, which includes the Kodiak Island Borough and portions of the Lake and Peninsula Borough. It was weeks after the August primary election before the winner of the Democratic contest was known, and now it might be just as long before we know the results of the general election.

Republican Alan Austerman has a thin lead over Democrat Andy Lundquist. With 13 of 14 precincts reporting as of 12:30 this morning, Austerman had 2,047 votes to Lundquist's 1,936, a difference of only 111. That is less than 3 percentage points difference.

It was an up-and-down night for the candidates, with only 11 votes separating them after the first round of precincts reported, but then Austerman's lead swelled to 125 later in the evening before shrinking to 89 votes at 11 p.m. and bouncing back up to 116 at midnight.

Austerman says he is not surprised by the closeness of the race:

-- (Dist 36-1 30 sec "It's hard to see them ... really good, close race.")

Lundquist had to wait weeks before he knew he had won the August primary election, and he seemed comfortable last night with waiting a little while longer for the general election results:

-- (Dist 36-2 12 sec "Heh, heh, I'm used to it ... that's the way it is.")

Austerman, who in the past has represented Kodiak in both the state house and state senate, gave the newcomer Lundquist credit for a job well done:

-- (Dist 36-3 14 sec "I've got to give Andy ... congratulate him on that portion.")

Lundquist said his campaign was about highlighting the differences between him and Austerman:

-- (Dist 36-4 24 sec "I think quite a few ... that's the way I'd do it.")

Though only one precinct has yet to report, there are an unknown number of absentee ballots outstanding. And given the brisk pace of early absentee-in-person voting that occurred in Kodiak over the past two weeks, there could be hundreds of votes left to count.