

Publication: San Antonio Express; Date: Jan 11, 2015; Section: Main; Page: A2

# Previtera surprises everyone but himself

Few political observers were surprised when former Councilman Diego Bernal emerged from Tuesday's House District 123 special election facing a runoff.

It was his runoff opponent that caught people off guard.

Most of us expected public-relations specialist Melissa Aguillon — like Bernal, a Democrat — to pose the biggest threat to Bernal in the six-candidate field. But when the votes were tabulated Tuesday night, it was Republican activist Nunzio Previtera — a 62-year-old Italian American insurance agent and self-described Air Force brat — who secured a spot in the second round with Bernal.

The overriding feeling on Tuesday night for the uber-confident Previtera, however, was not elation over the fact that he squeaked into a runoff, but disappointment that he didn't walk away with an outright win.

"I thought that we would be able to get enough turnout to surprise everybody really big, and win it on the first go-round," Previtera said.

The District 123 seat is being vacated by mayoral candidate Mike Villarreal, a Democrat who has registered more than 84 percent of the vote in each of his last five general elections. In 2012, the district went for Barack Obama over GOP presidential nominee Mitt Romney, by a margin of 61-37 percent.



Nunzio Previtera, left, is in a runoff with Diego Bernal for Texas House District 123.

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Nonetheless, Previtera saw opportunity in 2011 redistricting changes that extended the northern boundaries of the district — which includes King William and Alamo Plaza on its southern end — up to Huebner and Wurzbach roads.

"That area is a lot more conservative than the district was before," Previtera said. "But even more important, a lot of the people in that district, they may be Democratic, but they're actually pretty conservative minded. When you really sit down and start talking to them about value systems, they're beginning to realize that they share Republican values more than they share Democratic values."

Previtera was named after his paternal grandfather, who emigrated from Sicily to the United States in the early 1900s. A New York native, Previtera moved frequently as a child because of the military commitments of his father, a World War II and Vietnam veteran.

The family moved from

Izmir, Turkey, to San Antonio when Previtera was in seventh grade, and, except for a brief stint in Louisiana when he was in his late 20s, S.A. has been his home ever since.

It would be hard to find a more stark ideological difference between two candidates than the one that exists between Bernal and Previtera.

While Bernal is a proud progressive with a civil rights background, Previtera opposes minimum-wage increases, supports school vouchers and considers the local nondiscrimination ordinance championed by Bernal in 2013 (which extended equal-rights protections to members of the LGBT community) to be an example of discrimination because it singles out one group for what Previtera calls "preferential treatment."

Like most of his fellow Texas Republicans, he supports outgoing Gov. Rick Perry's decision to reject Obama's Medicaid expansion program, which would have brought the state an estimated \$65 billion in federal funding over the next decade.

"As an insurance agent, I'm one of those rare birds that actually did read the Obamacare bill before it passed," Previtera said. "The cost of it is astronomical."

## Capitol Inside makes case for Menéndez withdrawal

Mike Hailey, the editor of the Texas online newsletter Capitol Inside, made the case in a Wednesday editorial that state Rep. José Menéndez might want to consider withdrawing from his upcoming Senate District 26 runoff against Trey Martinez Fischer, after finishing a distant second to Martinez Fischer (43-25 percent) in the Jan. 6 special election.

Hailey suggested that by following through with an expensive, long-shot runoff battle, Menéndez not only creates the risk that SD 26 will be without representation for at least a month of this year's legislative session (although outgoing Sen. Leticia Van de Putte still holds the seat), it could also lead to retribution from Texas trial lawyers, who back Martinez Fischer, and might seek out 2016 primary opponents for Menéndez if he loses the Senate runoff.

Menéndez told Express-News reporter John Gonzalez Tuesday night that he fully intends to keep fighting for the Senate seat.

*ggarcia@express-news.net*  
*Twitter: @gilgamesh470*