

— THE — **ANN ARBOR NEWS**

With votes tallied, let's tone down the rancor **Key to good governance is compromise**

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Congratulations to the winners of Tuesday's primary elections. You have taken on the responsibility for representing the rest of us - for hearing our gripes, for making decisions that some (maybe many) of us disagree with, for thanklessly slogging through seemingly endless meetings, all in the name of democracy.

Whether new to office or re-elected, you now face the challenge of day-to-day governance. We wish you luck - it's a tough job.

Local elections this year were unusually rancorous - in several cases, the anger directed at people within the same political party was remarkable for its venom. We're puzzled and disturbed by the tenor of these elections, because a vital quality of the best governance at any level is the ability to listen, compromise and work well with those whose views you oppose.

We hope that all elected officials remember those qualities, and work hard to salve the bitterness of these past few weeks.

That said, let's look at some of the more interesting results from Tuesday's elections.

- In the Ann Arbor City Council and mayoral races, efforts by a faction of the city's Democratic Party to oust incumbent leaders were largely unsuccessful. We're especially heartened that Chris Easthope, a three-term 5th Ward council member, was returned to office by a resounding margin after suffering through a brutal campaign by challenger Sonia Schmerl. Schmerl, a former Historic District Commission chairwoman who's pushing for a greenway on the city's west side, used hardball tactics that seemed bizarre at times - likening Easthope, a moderate Democrat, to President Bush, for example - and it's great that voters weren't swayed by her efforts to smear one of the city's best public servants.
- After fighting off an emotionally scarred recall campaign, Pittsfield Township officials need to be magnanimous in the wake of their political second life. They should not arrogantly assume the vote was an endorsement of their conduct or support for the proposed Wal-Mart, which is at the heart of this dispute. Rather, voters are rightly reluctant to oust elected officials midway through their term in office, and the recall advocates weren't able to make a compelling case that the officials' behavior warranted that extreme measure. We also suspect voters were put off by the shrill tone of the recall backers - we hope they'll learn from their experience and mount a vigorous, issue-based challenge to the incumbents in 2008.

And as a peculiar sideshow, what was University of Michigan Regent Larry

Deitch doing in Pittsfield? Was the Bloomfield Hills attorney simply the intermediary for developers represented by his firm in support of the targeted officials, or was something else going on here? Too bad he's not talking.

- A move to shift costs for sheriff patrols from the county back to local municipalities was a factor in Tuesday's election, changing the composition of the Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners. Most candidates backed by supporters of Sheriff Dan Minzey to challenge incumbents were defeated. But Ypsilanti

Township's Karen Lovejoy Roe, a harsh critic of the county administration and board, beat board Chairman Wes Prater. And in District 2, incumbent Martha Kern-Boprie also lost to challenger Ken Schwartz, an attorney for Salem Township, which is one of three townships suing the county over the sheriff patrol issue. Those changes are likely to complicate efforts by Washtenaw County Administrator Bob Guenzel and the board in navigating this political minefield. Half of eight proposed millages designed to cover public safety costs in the townships were approved by voters.

- Rebekah Warren's solid defeat of Leigh Greden - beating him with

61 percent of the vote for the 53rd District state House seat - extends the reach of a growing political family whose roots trace back to Al Wheeler, Ann Arbor's first and only black mayor. Warren is engaged to Conan Smith, who was re-elected Tuesday to the Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners and is the son of state Rep. Alma Wheeler Smith, Al Wheeler's daughter. This is Warren's first elected position.

- Despite the contentious nature of many races on Tuesday, voter turnout wasn't tremendous - though by primary election standards, it wasn't bad. In Pittsfield Township, turnout was as high as 34 percent in one precinct, with overall turnout at 22 percent. That's about the same percentage turnout seen in Ypsilanti and several other areas - higher than most primaries, but still disappointingly low, in our opinion.

One lesson on Tuesday seems to be how, especially in low-turnout elections, each vote can be precious. In Ann Arbor's 3rd Ward, for example, Alice Ralph lost to Stephen Kunselman by only 29 votes. A millage for the Chelsea Area Fire Authority was defeated by just 17 votes.