



Republican Charles Djou Wins Special Election for Hawaii House Seat

Republican Main Street Partnership PAC backed Honolulu City Councilman Charles Djou in his May 22 special election victory for Hawaii's 1st Congressional District. Congressman Djou has indicated that he will join the Republican Main Street Partnership and assist in advancing its agenda in the House.

Djou's victory has been widely recognized as an indicator of the likelihood of major victories in the House and Senate in the fall. RMSP PAC thanks you for the contributions you have made that allowed us to give Congressman Djou our strong support.

Several facts support the significance of Congressman Djou's victory. Republicans had not won a special election in a vacant Democratic district since 2001. It had been over two years since Republicans had won any special election to the House.

Congressman Djou won almost 40% of the vote. Two Democrats won 31% and 28%. Djou's 40% represents an increase of 10% over the vote that Senator John McCain received in the 2008 Presidential race, in the district where President Obama was born.

The District was previously represented by Rep. Neil Abercrombie, who resigned the seat to run for Governor. Turnout was high for a special election – almost 50% of the voters turned in ballots.

According to some political experts, a divided Democratic party may continue to provide an advantage to Congressman Djou. Despite his third-place finish, Democrat Ed Case said May 24 he will still compete for the Democratic nomination and declared there is no way State Senate President Coleen Hanabusa can defeat Djou in November. Before the primary, some in the Democratic party tried to nudge Sen. Hanabusa out of the race, arguing she has a voter support ceiling much lower than Case's. But Sen. Hanabusa's second-place finish will complicate those efforts. And, the Sept. 18 primary gives the eventual winner just 6 weeks to stock up on much-needed cash before a general election. Congressman Djou already has \$200,000 in the bank for a general election contest, giving him an important financial head start.

Some press reports indicate that Democrats are beginning to consider the need for some kind of compromise candidate. They believe Sen. Hanabusa is still unlikely to win a general election, and Case will have trouble winning a primary. Though official behind-the-scenes talks have yet to begin, they could soon start in earnest.

After his election, Congressman Djou's press statements showed that he hopes to capitalize on a message of fiscal responsibility for his general election campaign. "We cannot continue down this path of running up enormous budget deficits and increasing the size of our national debt and expect no consequences," said Djou.

While Hawaii has a strong Democratic base, Republicans have had success in the past. The current Governor, Linda Lingle, also backed by RMSP PAC, won 62% of the vote in her re-election campaign in 2006.

But Republicans have held a House seat in Hawaii for only four years since it became a state in 1959, and it was the result of a 1st District Democratic fiasco in 1986 that resulted in Abercrombie winning and losing the seat on the same day. Abercrombie, a longtime member of the state legislature, won a special election in September 1986 to fill the vacated seat. But that election coincided with the regularly scheduled primary for the general election that November – and Abercrombie lost that nomination to local rival Mufi Hannemann.

The Democratic rift boosted Republican Patricia Saiki, who defeated Hannemann in 1986 to become Hawaii's first Republican House member. She left the 1st District seat open in 1990 for a Senate bid that failed, and Abercrombie rebounded to win the 1990 contest that began his long House tenure.

Tim Mak, writing in the Frum Forum, praised Djou after conducting an interview in January. Mak indicates he found "an intelligent, thoughtful and experienced candidate." Mak notes that Djou has no end to the accolades attached to his name: Adjunct Professor at the University of Hawaii; JAG reserve officer; named legislator of the year in '02, '04, '06; top forty under 40 to watch in Hawaii in 2005; and "best politician in the state" honors from Honolulu Weekly. Mak indicates that Djou is a moderate Republican who fits the Scott Brown mold. Djou told Frum Forum that he supported TARP; that he was pro-choice; that he would support the immediate repeal of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell"; and that the Republican Party had not done a good enough job at promoting environmental stewardship.

Mak predicts that Djou will be one of the most capable legislators Hawaii has ever sent to represent them in Congress.

Congressman Djou was educated at the University of Pennsylvania and received his law degree from the University of Southern California. He served in the Army reserve in 2001 and was elected to the Hawaii House in 2000. He has served on the Honolulu City Council since 2003.