McKenna Concedes Washington Governor Race

Local News

Posted by: David Haviland

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OLYMPIA, Wash. (AP) -- Republican Rob McKenna conceded defeat in his campaign for governor Friday night, bringing to close one of the nation's most watched and most expensive contests. McKenna campaign manager Randy Pepple said the updated election totals released throughout Friday made clear that McKenna wouldn't make up his vote deficit. McKenna's campaign had been saying through the week that late votes would turn in his favor, but that trend never materialized."It just became apparent that there wasn't enough of a buildup, even though he was cutting into the lead," Pepple said. "We just realized that there wasn't going to be enough of an offset."Inslee, McKenna and outside political groups raised and spent some $40 million in the race. McKenna had portrayed himself as a moderate with a plan to increase funding for education. Inslee had touted his plans to spur job growth by investing in clean energy and other specific sectors.Both candidates vowed to not raise taxes. Those policies will be put to the test for Inslee in January, when lawmakers begin negotiations over how to deal with a budget shortfall and the need for more education funding.

Republicans last won a governor's race in the state in 1980, when John Spellman was elected. Voters ousted Spellman at the end of his first time, around the time McKenna was student body president at the University of Washington.The GOP has come close in some elections, most notably the 2004 race in which Dino Rossi lost to current Gov. Christine Gregoire by 133 votes.Republicans had been cultivating McKenna as a potential gubernatorial candidate for years, as he worked his way from the King County Council to attorney general. In that seat, he won 59 percent of the vote in 2008. Inslee, meanwhile, took his first run at the governor's seat in 1996 but lost in a primary to eventual Gov. Gary Locke. He also bounced back from a 1994 defeat when he was serving as a congressman on the eastern side of the state and eventually won a new seat in Congress after his family moved west to Bainbridge Island.Inslee held that congressional seat for a decade, becoming a leader in clean energy issues.Clean energy also became a focus of Inslee's campaign for governor this year. He vowed to focus investments on that industry and others - such as life sciences and agriculture - to stimulate job growth.To deal with Washington's unbalanced budget, Inslee said the state would bring in extra money from economic growth. He also vowed to seek savings in the health care industry and make government more efficient by following "lean management" practices.McKenna, meanwhile, repeatedly noted that Olympia had been guided by Democrats for years and that the percentage of money going to education has shrunk under their watch. He vowed to cap non-education spending growth at 6 percent per biennium while also seeking improvements in health care costs and government efficiency.Gregoire has been skeptical about whether McKenna and Inslee's budget ideas are viable, and she believes new tax revenue is necessary.