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## Schneiderman Wins Democratic Attorney General Race

By NICHOLAS CONFESSORE

[Eric T. Schneiderman](#) won a narrow victory in the Democratic primary for state attorney general in a race that was closely contested by the five candidates but drew relatively little notice or interest from voters.

With 91 percent of precincts reporting, Mr. Schneiderman, a state senator representing parts of Manhattan and the Bronx, led with 34.3 percent of the vote, followed by 31.3 for [Kathleen M. Rice](#), the Nassau County district attorney.

Early Wednesday morning, after Ms. Rice conceded, Mr. Schneiderman said “I am honored, I am humbled, I am revved up and ready to go.”

Ms. Rice’s campaign issued a statement congratulating him.

“There are always more similarities than differences between the five Democrats who vied heartily for this office, and now is the time for party unity,” it said.

In third place in the race was [Sean Coffey](#), a trial lawyer and political novice who poured millions of dollars of his own money into his campaign, who had 16.7 percent of the vote.

Mr. Coffey was followed by Assemblyman [Richard L. Brodsky](#) of Westchester County, with 9.8 percent of the votes, and [Eric R. Dinallo](#), a former state insurance superintendent, with 7.9 percent. Mr. Schneiderman now faces Daniel K. Donovan Jr., the Staten Island district attorney, who was unopposed for the Republican nomination.

The down-to-the-wire tally capped a drawn-out campaign in which no one candidate ever dominated the field or clearly broke away from the pack. Just two weeks ago, a

public poll found that fewer than 10 percent of voters in the Democratic primary could name which candidate they were backing.

[Bill de Blasio](#), the New York City public advocate, told Mr. Schneiderman's supporters at a hotel in Manhattan that problems at the polling site may have worked against Mr. Schneiderman. "Despite the problems we saw all over and particularly in some parts of New York City," Mr. de Blasio said, "our field operation was out there, was strong for Eric Schneiderman. As these results come in, they are going to get better and better."

The final days of the campaign were marked by a last-minute surge in negative attacks between the two leading candidates, as Mr. Schneiderman criticized Ms. Rice for not having registered as a Democrat until a few years ago and Ms. Rice questioned whether a last-minute loan that Mr. Schneiderman made to his campaign actually came from family members.

But with the five candidates staking out largely identical positions on issues like public corruption, consumer fraud and Wall Street oversight, the contest's sharpest exchanges came over issues somewhat far afield from the attorney general's duties, like property taxes and prison sentences for nonviolent drug offenders.

None of the candidates could rely on an energetic race farther up the ballot to lend shape to the race or draw out voters. The Democratic candidate for governor, Attorney General [Andrew M. Cuomo](#), faced no meaningful opposition, and neither did the two United States senators, [Charles E. Schumer](#) and [Kirsten E. Gillibrand](#), both Democrats.

"The overwhelming feature of the race was, alas, lack of attention to it," said David S. Birdsall, a professor of public affairs at Baruch College. "To a certain extent, that is a residue of the absence of a meaningful contest in the Senate and governor positions. It became a contest between who could claim local recognition and support but not statewide recognition and support."

Mr. Schneiderman followed a pattern set in 2009 by Mr. de Blasio and [John C. Liu](#), the city comptroller.

While Ms. Rice captured the support of the Queens and Brooklyn Democratic organizations, in addition to Long Island Democratic leaders, Mr. Schneiderman won the backing of a loose coalition of African-American leaders and politically potent labor unions, like S.E.I.U. 1199, with powerful turnout operations.

That power was amplified by extremely low turnout among rank-and-file Democratic voters across the state on Tuesday. Mr. Schneiderman may also have been helped by Mr. Coffey, who flooded the airwaves upstate with television ads in the closing days of the campaign.

“The bigger and broader city constituencies and political organizations ultimately made the difference,” said Lawrence Levy, executive director of the National Center for Suburban Studies at Hofstra University.

The loss was a major setback for Ms. Rice, who had been considered early in the race to be the candidate to beat and, in some quarters, potentially the party’s best general election match-up against Mr. Donovan, a career prosecutor who has been endorsed by Mayor [Michael R. Bloomberg](#) and is likely to receive significant help from the mayor.

But it probably will not be the end of the political road for Ms. Rice, who remains popular in Nassau and will not be up for re-election until 2013.

“She’s young,” said Mr. Levy, executive director of the National Center for Suburban Studies at Hofstra University. “She’s not giving up a seat. She has an ability to continue to make herself a national figure on issues like drunk driving and computer crime. And she is a woman in a world with a dearth of female candidates running for higher office.”