



N.C. voters deny Dole, elect Hagan to U.S. Senate

Money, campaigning, anti-GOP tide help Greensboro lawmaker win with solid margin.

By **BARBARA BARRETT**
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Staff writers

GREENSBORO — Incumbent U.S. Sen. Elizabeth Dole lost her re-election bid Tuesday night to state Sen. Kay Hagan, done in by a combination of Hagan's tireless campaigning, millions of dollars from national Democrats and Barack Obama's strong emphasis on North Carolina.

It was an upset virtually unthinkable just a year ago, when Democrats scrambled to find a challenger to take on the well-financed and well-known Dole, the state's first female senator.

Hagan, a Greensboro Democrat, successfully tied Dole to President Bush, whose popularity has plummeted in the six years since Dole was hand-picked by the White House to run for the Senate. Dole was never able to overcome both her voting record and an infusion of money from the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee.

With 96 of 100 counties reporting, Hagan led Dole by 52.3 to 44.6 percent. Libertarian Christopher Cole had 3.1 percent.

Late Tuesday night, Dole entered Salisbury's historic train depot in her hometown with her husband, Bob, as 200 supporters stood and cheered. She acknowledged a hard-fought campaign in which, she said, tens of millions of dollars poured into the state to fight her re-election.

"I'm not happy with the tone that this campaign has acquired," she said, referring to negative advertising from both sides, "but I will say that I will never regret fighting as hard as I could for the privilege of continuing to serve you."

In Greensboro, several hundred Hagan supporters erupted into cheers when a network called the election for Hagan.

"I thought it would be a lot closer," said Tony Hunt of Raeford. "I think some of the last advertising by Sen. Dole really hurt her. It changed some undecided voters."

For many voters, the messages against Dole resonated. Exit polls showed Hagan did well among blacks, women and young voters; Dole did better among older voters, The Associated Press said.

"I was not happy with her,"

said Janice Henderson, 67, of Raleigh. "I don't think we got our money's worth out of her."

In the past few months, as Dole saw her lead slip in the polls and the economy faltered, national pundits moved the race from "leaning Republican" to "toss-up."

Meanwhile, Hagan blanketed the state with campaign stops. She was helped by ads from the national Democrats, most notably its "Rocking Chairs" ad showing two elderly men arguing whether Dole is "92 or 93." They were talking about her effectiveness ranking and her voting percentage with Bush. But the swipe at Dole's age — she is 72 — was hardly veiled.

Last week, the race took another nasty turn. Dole aired a TV ad that accused Hagan of taking "godless money" at a Boston fundraiser and linking her to an atheist group called the Godless Americans political action committee. The ad ended with a picture of Hagan and a woman's voiceover saying, "There is no God."

Hagan, who is an elder in her Presbyterian church and a former Sunday school teacher, responded with a lawsuit and her own ad, declaring, "I believe in God."

Dole's ad was widely panned, and some voters were turned off, too.

"The nail in the coffin was the Godless Americans thing," said Andre Wilson, 23, of Durham, who supported Hagan. He researched both candidates but was put off by Dole's ad.

But at Dole's rally late Tuesday, supporter Blake Jarman, 24, said Dole should have responded more aggressively to Hagan's attacks earlier in the campaign.

He also defended the controversial ad about Hagan's "godless money."

"Americans need to know what their candidate stands for and where they get their money from," Jarman said.

Dole said she was proud of her accomplishments and it has "been the highest honor in my life to be elected the first female U.S. senator in North Carolina history."

She recapped her career achievements, including jobs in the White House and as secretary of labor and transportation, and leading the American Red Cross. She asked her supporters to pray for Hagan's successful transition to the Senate seat, but Dole said she's not ready for retirement.

And, in an apparent reference to Hagan's ads suggesting



GERRY BROOME - ASSOCIATED PRESS PHOTO

Senator-elect Kay Hagan, D-N.C., celebrates at her election party in Greensboro on Tuesday. Hagan, who was recruited to run for the Senate, unseated incumbent Elizabeth Dole, who was seen as nearly unbeatable a year ago.

the senator spent little time in the state she represented, Dole added: "Salisbury has always been my rock of Gibraltar, and my home has always been Salisbury."

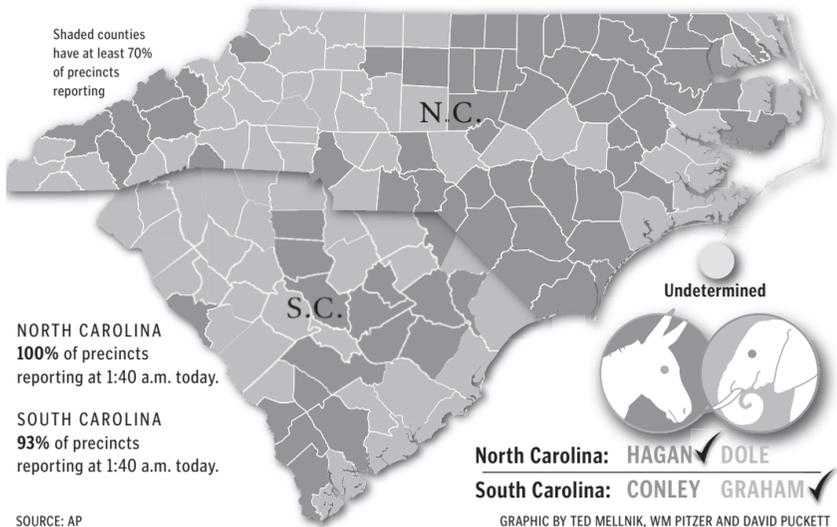
Both campaigns and their supporters put out a wealth of advertising, much of it negative. An Elon University poll conducted a week ago showed that 48 percent of those polled had a negative opinion of Dole's campaign, while 38 percent held a negative opinion of Hagan's campaign.

Dole was expected a year ago to easily win re-election. It would have been hard for any challenger to overcome the overwhelming name recognition of Dole, who ran for president in 2000 and served in the administrations of five presidents.

"Dole assumed, wrongly, that it wasn't competitive and that she wouldn't have a serious opponent," said Ted Arrington, a political scientist at UNC Charlotte. "She waited too long to get going."

— STAFF WRITERS WADE RAWLINS, DAN KANE, MARK JOHNSON, AND BENJAMIN NIOLET CONTRIBUTED TO THIS REPORT.

Carolinas' U.S. Senate Vote



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Sen. Elizabeth Dole, R-N.C., greets supporters as she leaves the Salisbury Depot following her concession speech Tuesday.

MARK WASHBURN ON ELIZABETH DOLE

Disgruntled N.C. voters sent their incumbent senator home — to Washington, that is. 15A

S.C. sends Graham back to Senate for 2nd term

Republican vows to reach out to Democrats and be a 'formidable' foe if necessary.

By **JOHN O'CONNOR**
The (Columbia) State

Republican Lindsey Graham easily won a second term in the U.S. Senate on Tuesday, defeating North Myrtle Beach engineer Bob Conley.

With 85 percent of precincts reporting, Graham had 57 percent of the vote to Democrat Conley's 43 percent. Graham had been dogged about his support for a failed immigration reform bill and for compromising with Democrats, but his reputation as a Senate Republican leader, strong support network and a multimillion dol-

lar funding advantage were too much for Conley to overcome.

The 53-year-old Seneca native was so confident of the night's win that he did two things unheard of from statewide GOP candidates: He left the state after casting an absentee ballot so he could be in Arizona at GOP presidential nominee John McCain's side, and he spent heavily on mailings and radio ads targeting Democrats for support.

Those actions irked Conley's campaign.

"I think it's rather disgusting," Con-

ley campaign manager Lee Griggs said. "I think he's being rude and out of line not staying in South Carolina to thank those voters, and it shows how little he does care about this state."

Graham said he knows he'll return to a Senate expected to swing further to Democratic control.

"If they try to increase the size of government and taxes in a way that will hurt the economy I will be a very formidable opponent," Graham said. "I'll reach out to my Democratic colleagues to see if we can find solutions to problems like Social Security, Medicare — the entitlements — that both parties have to work together to reach a solution."

Conley, 43, was an unusual candi-

date running an unusual campaign: a Ron Paul-supporting Democrat criticizing Graham's stance on the Iraq War, immigration and other issues.

According to his campaign finance reports, he raised just \$26,628. Graham raised \$71 million.

But the national forces favoring Democrats caused Graham some worry as well. On Election Day, his campaign sent out an e-mail warning of high Democratic turnout and urging supporters to vote.

Some voters lauded Graham's work

on the war in Iraq, immigration and the economy and said he deserves another stint.

"I know he supports the troops. He also supports John McCain. He's just a good conservative," said Renee Lindquist, a 41-year-old Columbia voter.

Conley had previously run for and lost an Indiana state House seat. He is a certified flight instructor. Conley would not comment until all votes had been counted.

Conley was a surprise winner of June's Democratic primary by just more than 1,000 votes. Conley never really received his party's blessing. Graham even sent out mail touting his endorsement by prominent Democrats. — THE ASSOCIATED PRESS CONTRIBUTED.



Conley