

TOP STORY

Cooper still leads after House recount, but margin narrows

By Jim Therrien, Bennington Banner correspondent
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A recount committee assisted Bennington County Clerk Marya Bossong in reviewing the votes cast in the Bennington-1 House race on November 5. The unofficial figures after the recount show Republican Bruce Busa trailing Democrat Jonathan Cooper by 13 votes, down from the 25 vote margin on election day.

By Jim Therrien, Bennington Banner correspondent

BENNINGTON – A recount in the Bennington-1 House district race apparently lowered Democrat Jonathan Cooper’s lead over Republican Bruce Busa from 25 to 13 votes.

However, the results remain unofficial until they are reviewed and signed off on by Superior Court Judge David Barra.

The recount, which began Monday morning at the Bennington County Courthouse on South Street, was completed by midday Tuesday.

A committee approved by the judge worked with County Clerk Marya Bossong on the recount. The candidates had submitted a list of possible representatives from which the judge selected an equal number from each.

Bossong said Busa picked up 11 votes in the recount in his unofficial total from Pownal and one more from Stamford, compared to the vote count on election day, November 5.

The vote totals in the other towns in the House district – Readsboro, Searsburg and Woodford – were unchanged.

Cooper is a resident of Pownal, while Busa resides in Readsboro.

This is the second consecutive House race in which Busa finished a close second and requested a recount. In 2022, he lost to current Democratic Rep. Nelson Brownell [D-Pownal], by 20 votes following a recount. Brownell led by 26 votes on election night.

Checklist errors

Also discussed concerning the Bennington-1 results was whether a revote of the race might be approved by the court.

A revote was recommended November 8 by the Secretary of State's Office.

📄 Recount set for Monday in Bennington-1 House race

The recommendation came after office staff and local election officials confirmed checklist errors involving about 40 Pownal voters who had been listed in the wrong House district. They were given the ballot with the Bennington-5 House candidates listed instead.

Bennington-5 includes a section of Bennington and the northeast corner of Pownal, and approximately 40 voter addresses along Barber Pond Road were listed in the wrong district during the statewide House redistricting process to account for population shifts in the 2000 federal census.

Revote?

Busa did file for a revote in Pownal only prior to the recount, but Barra denied the request last week.

The judge referred in his decision to a 1983 Vermont Supreme Court determination that the Vermont House has the final authority under the state constitution to determine the election and qualification of its members.

Busa said Tuesday evening that, after hearing how close the vote margin is now, he plans to take his request for a revote to the Legislature once the recount is certified by the judge. Such a request must be filed with the Secretary of State's Office.

Meanwhile, Cooper and Busa were both invited to attend an orientation for new lawmakers in Montpelier, in progress Tuesday through Thursday in the state capital and sponsored by the Snelling Center for Government.

More than 50 newly elected or returning legislators were eligible for the program, Cooper said.

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Jim Therrien

Re: Case: 24-CV-04565 - Bruce Busa v. Jonathan Cooper...

I just talked with the county clerk

Pownal

Total Voters checked in 1333

Cooper 745

Busa. 536

Other Write Ins. 3

Blank. 54

Defective. 6

Total. 1344

→ 526 ?
→ 1334 ?

When I add them up, it comes to 1344

* 11 EXTRA ballots *

Plus I have two write ins on the Ben 5 who are Ben 1 Residents.