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Thompson Ahead in Primary

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Former Board of Education President William Thompson enjoyed a sizeable lead over Brooklyn City Councilman Herb Berman in the Democratic primary — putting him in line to become the city's first African-American comptroller.

With 95 percent of the results in last night, Thompson had a comfortable 54 percent to Berman's 46 percent of the vote, according to unofficial results from the Board of Elections.

Because there is no Republican candidate for comptroller, the Democratic primary essentially served as the general election.

The apparent victory for Thompson marked the culmination of a nasty campaign that featured hard-hitting television commercials and political squabbling over who was responsible for the $2.8-billion cost overrun in school construction.

Counting 95% of votes, leads 54% to 46%

"He ran a campaign with politics at its worst," Thompson said of Berman. "I always believed politics and campaigns should be about issues, and vision for the office that you are running for and what you believed that the city should be. I tried to do that.

"Looking at vote totals, it indicates that people across the city were supportive," Thompson said.

Berman, the council's deputy finance director, did not return calls to his Brooklyn district council office or law practice.

Thompson was endorsed by the United Federation of Teachers, among the city's most powerful unions, while Berman enjoyed the support of District Council 37, the largest municipal workers union.

Elsewhere, the city's public advocate's race — which featured seven candidates — remained muddled yesterday with only one candidate, Betsy Gotbaum, assured a spot in the runoff. Based on 95 percent returns from the Board of Elections, attorney Norman Siegel held a slight lead over Brooklyn City Councilman Stephen DiBrienza, musician Willie Colon and Manhattan Councilman Scott Stringer — all hovering around 16 percent of the unofficial vote.

"I have listened to a lot of people, I have learned a lot and if I am in the runoff, I still have a lot of listening and learning to do in the next two weeks," Siegel said. "My commitment to New York and its people is stronger than ever."

Gotbaum did not return calls late yesterday. Attempts to contact DiBrienza, Colon and Stringer were unsuccessful.

City Council member Kathryn Freed and audiologist Sheila Flaxman received 9 percent and 3 percent of the vote, respectively.

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