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## Democrats rally for rural votes

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By: Britt Godshalk

SARATOGA SPRINGS, N.Y. -- “You have to listen,” said Senator Darrel Aubertine of Watertown. “And accept the fact that you are asking Republicans to vote for you. You're not going to win, in most cases, if you only have Democrats vote for you,” said Oneida Senator David Valesky.

It was advice on how to win senate races in the rural, Republican heavy areas of the state from two Democratic senators who did just that.

“I ran against a 20 year incumbent and in the state Legislature incumbents rarely lose,” said Valesky. But in 2004 Democrat David Valesky came out on top, as did Darrel Aubertine last month, despite the enrollment numbers. “Some 35,000 more Republicans than Democrats,” said Valesky.

Democrats are now a couple of seats away from taking the Senate Majority. Still, when Paloma Capanna told the party she wanted to be the first Democratic candidate to run in the 54th district in sixteen years, she met hesitation.

“They said, oh, it's a heavily Republican district, we don't know how you will do. But when you look at the voter registration statistics it was only a ten percent advantage for Republican registration, and a twenty three percentage voter registration with no party affiliation,” said 54th District candidate, Paloma Capanna.

Don Barber said until he came along folks in the 49th district had no real alternative other than voting Republican for more than a decade.

“They want someone who will lead and someone that will work on their issues, someone who understands they're issues,” said Barber.

“I think people are going to be more responsive to the people about what they're most concerned about. And they are more concerned about property taxes,” said Tom Suozzi, who is the NYS Commission on Property Tax Relief Chairman.

The challenge will be setting the tone that gets the votes. But two men who have done already so warned that the key is knowing each seat has its own pitch.

“As we head into November, you'll see individual senate elections in each of the areas as opposed to one broad theme,” said Valesky.

“With the right field of candidates, and the right direction, we can win back the State Senate. And I'm certainly glad to be a part of it,” said Aubertine.