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Former Leader of Klan Narrowly Wins Contest in Louisiana

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A former grand wizard of the Ku Klux Klan, narrowly defeated his opponent to win a seat today in the Louisiana Legislature after a campaign peppered with charges of racism.

The former Klan leader, David Duke, had 8,456 votes, or 51 percent, and his opponent, John Treen, a home buildier, had 8,232 votes, or 49 percent, a scant 224-vote difference. Both men ran as Republicans.

Mr. Duke, 38 years old, will represent the almost all-white House district in Metairie, a New Orleans suburb with about 21,000 voters.

Fearing a victory by Mr. Duke and an embarrassment for the Republican Party, President Bush and former President Reagan supported Treen, a longtime party functionary.

The Republican Party's Chairman, Lee Atwater, denounced Mr. Duke in a statement issued last night by Leslie Goodman, spokeswoman for the Republican National Committee.

''David Duke is not a Republican,'' Mr. Atwater said. ''We repudiate him in his views and we are taking immediate steps to see that he is disenfranchised from our party.'' Three Years Remaining

Election officials said about 78 percent of registered voters cast ballots today.

Mr. Duke won 33 percent of the vote to lead a field of seven in the Jan. 21 primary. Mr. Treen got 19 percent.

Under Louisiana's open primary system, the top two vote-getters in a primary, regardless of party, face each other in a runoff if no candidate receives more than half the vote. The seat opened when Metairie's representative was elected to a judgeship with about three years left in a four-year term.

In the 1970's, Mr. Duke was photographed in a Nazi uniform and became an international spokesman for the Klan. He maintained during the campaign that he regretted his actions of that time. Renewed Accusations

Mr. Duke left the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan in 1980, accused by another leader of selling secret membership rolls. He formed the National Association for the Advancement of White People, which he says is a civil rights organization for everyone.

Duke ran for the Presidency in 1988 as a member of the Populist Party in 15 states and drew less than 0.05 percent of the national vote.

Two days before qualifying for the Louisiana House race, he registered with the Republican Party.

Mr. Treen was state campaign chairman for Mr. Bush's 1980 Presidential campaign. His brother, David, was Louisiana Governor from 1980 to 1984.

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