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[Politics](#) | Tue Nov 20, 2012 | 2:10pm EST

Florida Representative Allen West concedes defeat



Republican U.S. Rep. Allen West speaks at a campaign stop with guests at SCORE South Palm Beach, a resource partner to the U.S. Small Business Administration, in Boca Raton, Florida October 18, 2012. West faces Democrat Patrick Murphy in a hotly contested election next... REUTERS/Joe Skipper

By [Jane Sutton](#) | MIAMI

Republican U.S. Representative Allen West, a favorite of the conservative Tea Party movement, conceded defeat on Tuesday after two weeks of challenges and partial recounts that only widened his Florida congressional opponent's victory in the November 6 election.

West, a former Army lieutenant colonel who quickly became a controversial figure in his two years in Congress, acknowledged that Democratic challenger Patrick Murphy had won the election after the recounts he requested widened his margin of defeat.

"While many questions remain unanswered, today I am announcing that I will take no further action to contest the outcome of this election," said the outspoken West, who had sought re-election to a second term in Congress.

West said he still had doubts about the accuracy of the election results in Florida's 18th congressional district, but that "our legal team does not believe there are enough overcounted, undercounted or fraudulent votes to change the outcome of the election."

West, 51, congratulated Murphy, a certified public accountant who had claimed victory on election night and again on Sunday after the deadline passed in a partial recount in the southeast Florida district.

Murphy, 29, a political newcomer who ran a surprisingly well-funded campaign that branded West as a divisive right-wing extremist, issued a statement on Tuesday saying, "I appreciate Congressman West's gracious concession today.

"I am truly humbled that the voters of the 18th district have entrusted me to represent them in Washington."

West's acrimonious comments about his political opponents served to rally Democratic support for Murphy.

West, one of two black Republicans in the House of Representatives, had called President Barack Obama a "low-level Socialist agitator" and called Obama supporters "a threat to the gene pool." He said as many as 81 House Democrats were members of the Communist Party, although he never identified them.

West spent 22 years in the Army and was a battalion commander during the Iraq war. He was relieved of his command in 2003 and fined \$5,000 after firing a gun near an Iraqi man's head during an interrogation.

Initial election results showed Murphy leading West by 1,900 votes. West challenged the results and was granted a recount of early ballots cast in St. Lucie County but it was not completed before a Sunday midday deadline to turn over results to the state Division of Elections. County officials went ahead and finished the recount, which expanded Murphy's lead to 2,100 votes.

West had vowed on Sunday to keep challenging the election, but accepted his defeat on Tuesday.

"Serving the people in the House of Representatives has been among the highest honors of my life, but this seat does not belong to me, or for that matter, to any individual. It belongs to the people," West said.

West had amassed one of the largest campaign war chests among House Republicans, thanks to his support from the conservative Tea Party movement.

(Reporting by Jane Sutton; Editing by Bill Trott)

(This story was refiled to eliminate incorrect reference to Americans for Prosperity as a donor)