

Middlesex GOP backs Giuliani, picks slates for state, county offices

Posted by The Star-Ledger March 31, 2007 2:57PM

Former New York City Mayor Rudy Giuliani got 67 percent of the vote today in a straw poll of 14 potential Republican presidential candidates conducted by the Middlesex County Republican Organization.

Giuliani got 151 votes from ballots cast by 224 GOP party workers and officials who gathered in Edison for the annual convention to decide who gets the party line in the June primary.

County Chairman Joseph Leo said the straw poll was an attempt to gauge the party's preference in next year's presidential campaign. U.S. Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.) placed second with 22 votes and Massachusetts Gov. Mitt Romney was third with 14 votes. The other candidates each got a handful of votes.

Leo was impressed more than 200 delegates who participated in today's convention. "It's a wonderful commentary on the vitality of the organization," said Leo who is trying to expand the party, which has not won a countywide race in more than a decade.

The delegates nominated a slate of candidates for county office and the legislative district. The three freeholder candidates are: Geoffrey Champion of South Plainfield, who is making his second bid for the seat; Danny Kerwin of Old Bridge; and John Rucki, a one-time member of the Mount Olive Township Council before moving to Sayreville, where he now sits on the zoning board. Democrats control all seven seats on the freeholder board.

Lynda Wood Cleary, who was the unsuccessful South Brunswick mayoral candidate last year, is now running for county surrogate. While Robert Oras of Edison, a retired Jersey City police sergeant who now heads the police academy there, is vying to become the next sheriff.

Contributed by Diane C. Walsh