

**Minnesota Now (MPR) | Minnesota Now DFL's Ettinger loses special election, will get another shot in November 01GA4F42VZR4BS55FM14RE8HJS**

BRIAN BAKST: You're listening to a special post-primary edition of *MinnesotaNow*. I'm Brian Bakst. Mike Mulcahy and I are talking with candidates who were on the ballot yesterday and who you'll see again in November. Former Hormel Foods CEO Jeff Ettinger fell short in his bid for public office. But he will face-- have a chance to avenge that defeat in a few months as voters this November fill the 1st Congressional District seat for the next two years. Ettinger is on the line now, and thanks for coming on.

**JEFF ETTINGER:** Oh, thanks for having me. It's my honor to follow my friend Governor Walz and also to hear Martin Zellar, who's from my hometown, Austin.

**BRIAN BAKST:** Well, Mr. Ettinger, is your defeat indicative of the tough environment that your party is in for this fall, especially in rural concentrated districts like the 1st?

**JEFF ETTINGER:** Well, we outperformed the predictions in the area. Lot of folks said, oh, it had gone-- the district had leaned way red. And we ended up losing 51% to 47%, so outperforming those predictions. We won big in our primary. And we feel we have momentum toward a new more advantageous district heading forward to November.

**BRIAN BAKST:** A lot's been made about President Joe Biden's low approval ratings. Is it going to be a drag on your party come November?

**JEFF ETTINGER:** Well, we significantly outperformed President Biden's performance, even from 2020. So I think it shows that Southern Minnesotans are concerned about local issues and are connecting with the local representatives that they're having a chance to see during the race. And we'll continue to emphasize things that are important in our area.

**BRIAN BAKST:** Not many candidates get a redo so quickly after a loss. Is there something you wish you'd have done differently or might do differently as this next phase of the race moves ahead?

**JEFF ETTINGER:** No, I mean, I'm going to continue to emphasize that I'm a moderate, a non-politician, somebody who has a proven track record for getting things done, both in business and as a community leader. Clearly, as we head into the November election, turnout will be probably three times as high as it is for an August race. The colleges will be back in session, and we'll certainly be active, going to those areas.

And we have some new parts of the district up in Goodhue County and Wabasha County that we've already had a chance to see some of the folks. But this will be their first chance to vote in a competitive general election for us.

**BRIAN BAKST:** So as voters give you a second look or more voters give you a first look, what do you wish they knew more about of you?

**JEFF ETTINGER:** I mean, I think I'm so gratified at the kind of performance we got out of our local area. And if you're the CEO of a Fortune 500 company in a small town, everybody knows everything about you. And so I think it speaks well to the fact that I'm an approachable person, a community-minded person that we perform so strongly locally, that certainly was part of my effort during the more recent phase is to get out to other parts of Southern Minnesota and introduce myself to them as well.

I had a chance to do that with a lot of voters. And I'll have more chances over the next couple of months.

**BRIAN BAKST:** So be better being a CEO or a candidate?

[LAUGHS]

**JEFF ETTINGER:** They're very different. And I understand that serving in Congress would be very different. You're one of 400 plus representatives from all over the country. And so you're only going to be as effective as you are at persuasion and at reaching out to others. I've talked to Congressman Dean Phillips. He's part of a group called the Problem Solvers Caucus, 28 Republicans and 28 Democrats. That's something I would certainly want to apply to be part of because that's part of the bipartisan effort that I truly believe in.

**BRIAN BAKST:** Republican Brad Finstad is going to Washington. How much time do you plan to spend on highlighting votes or stances he takes while he's there for the next few months?

**JEFF ETTINGER:** Well, I mean, that's certainly relevant to his record, and so we'll see what comes up over these next couple of months. We've obviously tried to run a positive race emphasizing my experience and my less partisan approach. But we'll see what comes of those votes. I mean, one area that we clearly did emphasize and I think had traction with voters this time, a very concerning issue, was our divergent stance on Roe v. Wade that we thought it was great that the decision was overruled after 50 years of precedent.

And I really felt that it was a kind of a disaster for the country that we've now put women and their doctors in the positions of being made into criminals.

**BRIAN BAKST:** You already put a lot of money into this race. Are you going to keep doing that?

**JEFF ETTINGER:** I mean, we're going to be competitive. We haven't really assessed the money side of it for round three. I mean, it's been an interesting three-stage race. But we were competitive in round two with Mr. Finstad. And I'm sure we'll do that again.

**BRIAN BAKST:** Well, Jeff Ettinger, the 1st District DFL nominee. Thanks for coming on. Hopefully, we'll hear more from you in the months ahead.

**JEFF ETTINGER:** You bet. I'd love to be back on the show. Thank you for having me.